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*Familiar Letters—Riverside Press, N. Y., 1776, pages 22, 43, 46, 47, 79, 172, 220, 277.

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THE SMART SET

A MAGAZINE OF
CLEVERNESS

Vol. XXV

JULY, 1908

No. 3

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THE MISTRESS OF HOUNDS

By Jay Hardy

I

MRS. "BILL" WARE continued to be called Mrs. Bill long after the kindly man who had bestowed his name and fortune upon her had been removed by misunderstood appendicitis from the field of her activities. "Bill" suited the lively lady, and her own name, Gertrude, did not; and it is to be feared that behind her back some of the men in Mrs. Ware's set occasionally referred to her as "Bill" without the dignifying prefix, and that others in the outer circle of her intimacy innocently took up the fashion, supposing the name to be a playful corruption of the tag given her at baptism.

Mrs. Bill lived for most of the year in the hunting district of Beach Island, where she had a house within easy distance of the Glendale Club. She kept a stable. By the word stable should be understood not an architectural creation in timbered Elizabethan, with a capacious flat for the coachman's family overhead, carriage and harness-room, and stalls wherein munched a fat collection consisting of two respectable pairs of hackneys, one phaeton pony, one horse of all work, and one safe and solid lady's riding cob. That was not Mrs. Bill's style. Her stable was a stable in the hunting sense. If she possessed a carriage horse at all it was by accident, for the automobile represented to her mind the humdrum conveyance of social respectability, while horses stood for Sport.

In Mrs. Ware's neat stable there were none but saddlers, most of them hunters, long, lean animals, strong in bone,

with small, curious heads peeping out of the sheets and hoods in which they passed their days when not in active service. Mrs. Ware had not always followed the hounds, for she had not been born in the purple of abundant dollars, and in the pre-matrimonial days her acquaintance with horse-flesh had been limited to the family carriage horse, driven in what used to be known as a carryall. Mr. Ware's income, mounting higher and higher as his output of soaps and perfumes increased, had introduced Mrs. Ware successively to the riding academy, the steady road hack, the well-bred one and finally to the thoroughbred hunter, the stone wall and barred gate.

After Mr. Ware's death she had taken a house at Glendale, and by means of her good-nature, friendly ways, splendid horsemanship and general presentableness won an almost instant popularity with the sporting set who had founded and maintained the Glendale Club. The informal outdoor life they led suited Mrs. Ware; and having arrived so far, she admitted herself contented enough, and for the moment aspired no higher, though Mr. Ware's perfume-scented pile was of a size that might have tempted a less easy-going woman to adventurous social flights. But if Mrs. Ware had social aspirations they were intermittent and inarticulate.

Mrs. Ware was very "horsy," but she was not vulgar. Nor, although her passion was one that necessarily surrounded her with men rather than women, had the gossip she did not mind giving her friends material for, ever passed the confines of scandal.

It was considered highly probable that she would marry again—to a hunting woman there is more convenience than inconvenience in the possession of a husband, provided he have congenial tastes—and likely that in taking such a step she would consider family prestige rather than money. She had enough of the latter for herself and a dozen husbands, and of the former all too little, native or acquired, to satisfy her sneaking admiration for pedigree and an irreproachable family connection.

It was perhaps for this reason that she had secretly determined upon rescuing a niece of her husband from a fashionable school where she professed to teach French, to occupy the place of official daughter to herself. Alice Ware had married the good-for-nothing scion of a distinguished family, and had been received with tepid warmth into their circle. The worldly wealth of the Parmers had been recently declining, and they had not yet got around to doing anything for Jack Parmer's daughter. It seemed to Mrs. Ware that she would be winning a comfortable recognition, together with gratitude, without too much trouble to herself, by stepping in and giving the girl a home. These were the reasons she openly gave herself; but it often amuses good-natured people to pretend to self-interest. Exactly what motives animated her aunt-in-law, Lucy Parmer would doubtless in the course of time find out for herself.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Ware looked forward to the installation of her niece at The Birches, with a hopeful and timid excitement. She was so full of her project that on a beautiful October morning she lost for the first time in her life a cross-country run. She had a horse to try out, and had promised the Master to be on hand; but though she had come down for breakfast in good season, dressed already in her habit, the preliminary letter to Lucy took so long that when she hove in sight of the Glendale Club it was quite eleven o'clock and the field was off without her.

II

A CLUB veranda is an excellent viewpoint for the hard, black outlines presented in the clear morning light by a lady on horseback.

The two young men loafing by the rail pulled their chairs about to get the best possible light on Mrs. Bill as she came cantering up the drive. She waved her crop at them in good-fellow style, and wondered what they might be saying about her.

The tall, light-haired, elegant youth in flannels was Win Winchester. He was a universal sport, to whom horses and Glendale were but one of his many irons in the fire. He went in for hunting, polo and yachting, was a favorite with the women, who were all a little afraid of him; and cultivated besides the lighter arts of bridge and conversation delicately spiced with scandal and detraction. Andy Crawford was a more typical specimen of the Glendale staple; he was a better fellow than Win, and a more thorough horseman; his heavy, honest, good-humored look advertised him as a man who worked for his living and who meant in his leisure hours to be as happy as he could.

"Our Mistress of Hounds," drawled Win Winchester, his languid eye on the advancing Mrs. Bill, "rides heavier than last season; a full stone heavier, if you ask me."

"Ah, but the horse doesn't know it," observed Andy Crawford. "She's nothing to carry, if she does weigh a hundred and fifty-odd. She's no sylph, and ain't the handsomest woman I ever saw up, but I'd trust a nag of mine to her as quick as I would to anything in skirts—except my wife," he added as a dutiful second thought, for Andy was but recently married, and anxious to play the part according to the most approved standard.

Mrs. Bill was out of the saddle before either of the two men could get down the steps to assist her, sent home the groom who had come on ahead with her hunter and was still patiently walking him about, had the hack taken round to the stables, ordered a cup of

coffee to be sent her on the veranda, and then joined the two men, beaming and ready to be amused. In spite of her extra stone—for the scales registered it as a fact—Mrs. Bill looked that morning almost girlish in her artfully rough English habit, with the sun shining full upon her braided glossy black hair, her rosy, wind-blown face, and revealing with all his insistence not a single item in the way of gray hairs, lines or wrinkles or any of the unpleasant details that may be looked for when thirty-five is approaching. The woman whose figure and coloring will endure the painful frankness of riding-clothes may look in the glass with satisfaction and call herself safe.

"So far, so good," began Mrs. Bill, settling herself back comfortably in her chair; "what's the news? I've been in New York for a week, pretending to amuse myself with eating and the theatres. Has anything happened?"

"How could it, while you were away?" drawled Winchester.

"I suppose, being a man, one has to say that kind of thing," commented the lady drily. "What's happened, Andy?"

"Do you remember," began Andy slowly, "a chap that Clipston put up and mounted once or twice last season?—a chap named Sullivan?"

"I should think I did!" cried Mrs. Bill, roused to sudden indignation by the mere name; "a big, raw-boned, three-cornered, half-bred brute! Let me give him a lead over a fence and came a cropper with me still under his feet. Came a cropper, mind you, while there wasn't another man in sight; and I had to catch his beast for him and hold it while he got up. Remember him? I never saw such a duffer in my life!"

"Yes," agreed Andy slowly. "Well, you know Clipston put him up for membership."

"He didn't!"

"Begging your pardon, he did."

"That's like Archie's silly good-nature for all the world! And expected him to make it, I dare say, kind-hearted old idiot!"

"He has made it."

Mrs. Bill appealed to Win in dumb amazement. "Sure," he corroborated, "he's in. It's all right. Wears puttees, rides cart-horses and broken-winded screws, hardly knows a snaffle from a curb, but he's in all right. Means to use his privileges, too. Saw the old chap loafing round here not half-an-hour ago."

"If I were a full member of the club," pronounced Mrs. Bill in disgust—it was one of the grievances of her life that being a woman she could not be—"I'd resign."

"Oh, come now," said Andy, "I know Sullivan on the street. He's what you'd call a self-made man, I suppose, but an awfully good sort for all that. Not a lady's man, of course."

"Rather not!"

"But the men like him. A very sensible chap to talk to—understands politics and things."

"What's a puttee more or less, when you understand politics?" put in Win airily. "Supposing he does come a cropper. Instead of running after his horse, he can sit still and comfort himself by thinking that if he can't ride he does know who's going to be the next President."

"Bah!" said Mrs. Bill. "You're none of you pure in heart, you men. I suppose the man's obliged some of you with loans or tips or something, so you have to let him in."

"Oh, you're not fair to the poor old chap," protested Andy, "he really is an awfully—"

"Bah!" pronounced Mrs. Bill again. "He may be a smooth talker, a good business man and kind to his poor old mother, but he should go somewhere else to have his charms appreciated—somewhere where they're looking for angels. What we want down here, I take it, is men who know horses and can ride."

"Sullivan can stay on just like anybody—on the flat," pursued the still sardonic Win.

"Advise him to stick to it then," said Mrs. Bill shortly. "And there's another thing. You *do* like to have

men about the club that you can ask to your house without having them mistaken for the servants."

"You can comfort yourself that Sully'll never be mistaken for an hostler or a groom—nothing half so knowing!"

Mrs. Bill rose abruptly, utterly disgusted that the men persisted in treating so flippantly what to her was a serious matter; and alleging that she was cold, made for the billiard-room, which opened directly on the veranda.

On the threshold she paused, started and emitted an almost audible "Oh!" But neither the act nor the sound attracted the attention of the smokers outside, as her trim black figure was engulfed in the comparative gloom of the billiard-room.

III

"WITHOUT having them mistaken for the servants," said the feverish beats of Mrs. Bill's good-natured heart. "Oh, Lord! What did I say it for?"

The man who rose to his feet as she committed herself positively to entering the room, had been seated in front of the fire, staring into it. His face was red, but then it was naturally a high-colored sort of face, and the billiard-room fire was very hot. His manner as he rose was not in perfection that of a man fully at ease; but considering his heavy frame, his large joints, his undeniably clumsy hands, there was in it a surprising amount of dignity. Moreover, it was non-committal, and his lace, though serious, gave no clue whatever to the quality of its seriousness.

Had or had not Mark Sullivan heard the atrocious things she had just been saying about him? Mrs. Ware could not in the least make out; and in her embarrassment and sudden rush of penitence she took a step that for the moment placed the situation completely in his hands.

"I beg your pardon!" gasped Mrs. Bill.

To her horror a deeper red spread over his forehead and temples. He had heard, he had heard! She had been a

brute. She would never slander anyone again—except behind locked doors.

But Sullivan smiled as he placed a chair for her at a discreet distance from the fire. In his smile there was a reticent amusement. "Why beg my pardon?" he asked. "Do you suppose that because I'm such a big animal I must necessarily want my cage to myself?"

He couldn't have heard! The man was too stupid to have escaped so neatly if he had.

And yet—if he had heard he couldn't possibly admit it. Scandal-mongering in some circumstances is shameful, but eavesdropping, even if it be accidental, is nameless and impossible. Even a Sullivan would know that.

He was looking at her, still red, but still amused.

"Why beg my pardon?" he repeated.

Now if he had overheard, and if any human being could be so forgiving, or so thick-skinned, or so deeply designing as to be willing to overlook her impudence, *could* that same being have the effrontery consciously to force a woman to acknowledge her own guilt? Mrs. Ware wished pitifully her head would stop whirling.

"Why beg my pardon?"

"I—I don't know," faltered the horsey Mrs. Bill like any school-girl. "It *was* silly, wasn't it? For of course I really do feel very kindly toward you, Mr. Sullivan. I'm—I'm ever so glad to hear you've become a full member of the club."

Oh, dear! Things were getting worse and worse. Here she was dragging into the light of day, on the shabbiest of pretenses, the consciousness that should have been the secret unshared possession of each; disclaiming responsibility for what she had said and apologizing for it in the same breath. Here she was making a spectacle of herself before the very man she had publicly branded as hopelessly uncouth. If only she might have said these things of somebody else!—though indeed there was nobody else whom they so admirably fitted. Mrs. Bill was certainly in a mess.

Sullivan bent forward to poke the fire. What would perturbed minds do without fires to poke? When he raised his head his face was grave again; nor when he spoke could Mrs. Bill, try in her uneasiness as she would, detect the faintest shade of irony in his words.

"I am particularly glad, Mrs. Ware, to hear that from you. Of course it's an honor to be vouched for by the club and all that. But I'd rather you'd pass me than all the rest of the club put together."

"Why?" murmured Mrs. Bill, bewildered. "What on earth do you mean?"

"Because if things turn out as it seems very likely they may, I shall have to get your permission to be a very frequent visitor at your house." Was there a shade of consciousness in his voice? She was almost sure there was; and just as sure that the feeling that went along with it was not resentment, but deprecation, compassion.

She looked at him inquiringly.

"On account of your niece," he continued.

"On account of my niece?"

"I sha'n't wonder at your being surprised. I am so fortunate as to be engaged to Miss Parmer." On his face as he said it there was a look of such open rapture and reverence that Mrs. Bill could not but respect him. Her first thought, indeed, was of wonder, that a crude girl could inspire such a feeling; but this was before the gates were open and the flood of her own disappointment and dismay were upon her. She was, then, to take Lucy into her house, make her fit for any future, only to give her in the end over to a Mark Sullivan! There was a pang, too, at Lucy's being such a deceitful little minx as to suppress this engagement in the account of herself she had given to her aunt. But disturbed though she was, Mrs. Bill was game. Reflection was for tomorrow. What was due from her now was a sustained and unimpeachable courtesy.

"All settled, is it?" she smiled.

"I think I may say so."

"Then I do congratulate you, Mr. Sullivan; and I shall be happy to see you at The Birches as often as Lucy may think fit." She even shook his hand warmly at the conclusion of the speech.

Mrs. Ware let Winchester put her up in unprecedented silence. She was thinking how he would laugh at her when he knew whom she was about to welcome as a nephew.

Her mind was wordless as she trotted nimbly homeward; but its atmosphere was profane.

IV

IN another week Lucy arrived; and after she had been shown the room Mrs. Ware had had done over for her, and Mrs. Ware's own maid was busy unpacking her trunks, the mistress of The Birches plunged into the task of making the acquaintance of her niece. It seemed easiest to begin by taking Lucy into her confidence with regard to her own beloved hobby; and on the assumption that Lucy's mind could not possibly be at peace until she had taken stock of the horses and stable appointments, she had not been in the house an hour before Mrs. Ware had hustled her off for an inspection of the hooded darlings.

"This is Larkspur," declared Mrs. Bill eagerly, as a beautiful full-bay mare was led from her stall and stripped. "One of the sweetest you ever threw a leg over. Upon my word, if you gave me my pocket full of money I shouldn't know where to look for a better one. A little sticky in a ploughed field, maybe, but give her good hard going and plenty of fences and she skims them like a bird. You wouldn't believe me if I told you of some of that mare's jumps, or of what she can take in her ride. Chooses her own take-off, too, mind you, and never makes a mistake. Just look at her legs, though—that tells the story."

Lucy looked languidly at Larkspur's legs and smiled agreeably.

Mrs. Bill gave her favorite an approving slap on her glossy shoulder, and bade Barney bring out Sir Donald.

"A bigger horse, you see," went on the show-woman. "Nearly sixteen. Not so much breeding, but more bone. He's the boy for all-around, nasty work and plenty of it. More of a man's horse, I dare say you think, but if you will plunge in where the men go, you must be mounted like them. Sir Donald isn't so keen to be in the same field with the hounds, but gets you in about as often."

Lucy, looking at the white star on Sir Donald's forehead, hazarded the remark that he had a nice face.

Mrs. Bill looked a little dubious at this bit of amateurishness, and entered with less zest into the description of the next half-dozen.

"This is Harlequin," she announced finally, stopping before a stall. "Feeding nicely, isn't he, Barney?" And indeed Harlequin's steady, unrelenting crunch might have been heard for a couple of miles. "A great pet with everybody, is Harlequin. Just slip into his stall, Lucy, and give him a lump of sugar."

Lucy started obediently, but once in the stall hung back undetermined. "I'm afraid he'll bite, aunt."

"Bite!" echoed Mrs. Bill in scorn. "If he does he'll bite with his teeth, you know, not with his heels. Harlequin's as gentle as a kitten; but do come out if you're afraid."

Lucy came out as obediently as she had entered, not at all embarrassed at being shown up, and smiling a little derisively.

"Come, child, own up!" commanded her aunt briskly. "I don't believe you know a hock from a fetlock."

"I assure you I never heard of either before this minute," admitted Lucy quite coolly. And the smile spread until she went off openly into frank laughter.

"This is cool enough!" thought Mrs. Bill to herself, but joining good-naturedly enough in Lucy's laughter. "And you've let me bore you to death all this while without uttering a protest!"

"Oh, I didn't mind, I assure you," said Lucy, with languid politeness.

"Don't you even ride, my dear?" asked Mrs. Ware, pathetically. Adopting nieces was a career full of disappointments, she began to find.

Lucy acknowledged her ignorance.

"We'll teach you."

"I'll get Mark to teach me," suggested Lucy, with a wicked look out of the corner of her eye.

"I dare say he'd be better than nobody."

"I say, aunt," said Lucy after a pause, "he really is an awful duffer, isn't he?"

Mrs. Ware owned to a fearful joy in having the conversation, without any interference of her own, brought round to the subject of Mark Sullivan. Her niece, who at their first interviews had seemed a docile, doll-like bit of femininity, now puzzled her so that she could hardly persuade herself that Lucy had not somewhere or other picked up an entirely new personality. Her delicate pink and white face, with odd, almond-shaped eyes, and crown of yellowish hair that bountifully afforded puffs and curls without the assistance of art, her soft, drawly voice, her dainty frocks that seemed to have been created by pure taste without the assistance of money—these were all the same, but the spirit in the little temple was different. The imagined Lucy had been so young as to be almost crude, fresh, malleable, single-minded; presumably just the child to be delighted with a pretty toy, enthusiastic on the threshold of new experiences and grateful to the kind-hearted relative who was undertaking to plan her career. The real Lucy was finished, experienced, fastidious. She had few enthusiasms and presumably few illusions. As much of her desires and tastes as she chose to exhibit was surprising; and the quizzical turn of her phrases, the odd gleams from her eyes, hinted that there was plenty still in reserve. Could she have been clever enough to have started out by hoodwinking her aunt?

That an unsophisticated Lucy could have engaged herself to Mr. Mark

Sullivan was odd, but that a sophisticated one could have done so was to Mrs. Ware amazing. She longed, with a feeling that was not all curiosity, nor all interest, to put her finger on the secret of that remarkable affair.

"He really is an awful duffer, isn't he?" repeated Lucy after a pause.

"You mean about horses?"

"Yes, about horses. I can trust my own judgment as to his dufferishness in other departments of life."

"Have you come to a decision about that?"

"Oh, yes!"

"What is it?"

"I'm not bound to incriminate myself," returned Lucy in pregnant calm. "But as to horses, you needn't outrage your feelings of propriety by giving him away. I've seen him ride."

"Then however," burst out Mrs. Bill in exasperation, "could you go and engage yourself to a man who was bound to make you ridiculous?"

It was quite simple, it seemed. Again the look of angelic simplicity descended upon Lucy as she told her aunt the long-awaited story. She had been visiting one of her pupils over a Christmas vacation. Mr. Sullivan was a business associate of her friend's father. The house and the atmosphere, Lucy managed to indicate without saying so, were a little dull, and it had fallen to her lot to enliven the monotony for Mr. Sullivan. The charm had worked so well that on their return to town he had come to the school for more of it.

"He used to invite me to dinner and to the theatre," said Lucy, "but of course I wouldn't go."

"Why not?"

"Do you think it would have been proper?"

"I am trying to find out what you think."

"Ah! well, I thought it wouldn't be—Besides, he is such a clown. I particularly didn't wish to be seen in public with him."

"When you are married you'll have to be seen with him every day of your life."

"Shall I really?" asked Lucy, with a look of heavenly innocence. "Oh, well, there are always compensations. He really has a lot of money, aunt."

The remark was made so carelessly that innocence, not calculation, might have dictated it. Nevertheless, Mrs. Bill, looking into her niece's fresh, unlined face, rather gasped.

"Upon my word, my dear, one gets used nowadays to almost anything from the younger generation; but I never yet have had the experience of hearing a girl talk of her fiancé as you do of yours."

"You can't know many girls, aunt," said Lucy, quite unruffled. "We're all alike nowadays. Besides, now I appeal to you—how could one talk of him in any other way? Were you romantic about Uncle Bill before you married him?"

"Poor old Bill! I had at least a few illusions!"

"And was he the only man you were ever engaged to?"

Her aunt was obliged to admit that William had had a predecessor.

"Oh!" said Lucy, wisely. "One never knows. There must always be experiments. One man leads to another."

"I give you up," said Mrs. Bill, with a sigh. "I never saw your like."

Lucy's eyes narrowed in sly triumph. "And meanwhile you'll be very nice to Mark for my sake, won't you?" she coaxed.

"I expect I've got to be," groaned Mrs. Bill, "for it's evident that you'll keep me in a constant mush of pity for the man."

V

Few days passed that did not see Mrs. Ware at the Glendale Club on one pretext or another. On the next day after her niece's arrival she stayed at home, and the two women bored themselves over their embroidery frames till they nearly yawned in each other's faces. The second day was a Wednesday, traditionally devoted at this sea-

son of the year to "larking"; and when the morning dawned fair, Mrs. Bill had her coffee and rolls in bed, and descended, according to immemorial custom, in her riding-habit. Lucy seemed rather pleased than otherwise to be left, and thought that being driven to the scene of action would not amuse her; so Mrs. Ware had around Columbine and was off, shedding with every pace a pound or two of the responsibility that had begun to weigh her down. The eternal pleasure of the mere act of riding to its devotee, forgotten one day to be joyfully remembered the next, enveloped her in the fresh morning air, and she arrived at the club-house once more the rosy Mrs. Bill of yore, and came skipping up the veranda steps, laughing and tapping her neat boot with her crop, like a care-free Lady Gay Spanker.

The veranda was full and very gay. Half the assembly was got up in riding-togs, and those who were not so smart consoled themselves with blooming out like gorgeous flowers against the sober blacks and grays. Waiting horses were being walked about on the green. Everybody was talking at once. Mrs. Bill, as she plunged through the groups, was conscious of the pause and sudden change of pitch that heralds the approach of the prevailing subject of gossip. Of course they were talking about her, and the delicious joke of her having to welcome her pet aversion, Mark Sullivan, in the rôle of nephew. Let them! Mrs. Bill, with the fresh morning air in her face and the prospect of a brisk ride ahead, would cheerfully have parted with her worldly wealth, her future prospects and her reputation—with anything but her seat in the saddle.

"My dear Gerty," said her bosom friend, Mrs. Clipston, drawing her a little aside, "I hear you're to be felicitated."

Mrs. Archer Clipston was a buxom lady of gracious forty-five, who lived and throve in an atmosphere of horsiness, but had not been seen up in the memory of man. Mr. Clipston was a good fellow and a hard rider; and with

the cordial assistance of his wife, promoted good-fellowship and hard riding in others, by means of a well-stocked cellar and a thriving stable. Both of them talked a good deal and, in the opinion of good judges, Mrs. Clipston's talk was rather more highly charged with the sporting flavor than her husband's. She had been a handsome woman and was so still; though beauty had fled from her eyes and cheeks and resided chiefly in her elaborately waved hair, her beautifully restrained figure and her wonderful gowns. She was the soul of good-nature, and harmless gossip and intrigue were to her the breath of life.

"Felicitated?" repeated Mrs. Bill, laughing. "On all kinds of things! First, you must know, I negotiate for a niece, a plain, simple niece, fit for the road and without trick or vice. The article is delivered and proves to be a finished High Schooler. So much the better. The little lady, moreover, is completely out of the novice class and has already won her first blue ribbon—namely, Mark Sullivan!"

"My dear Gertrude!" Mrs. Clipston was divided between concern at the situation and amusement at her friend's description of it. "Whatever did you do?"

"Hung the blue ribbon with the rest of my trophies and—to change the metaphor—fell upon the blue ribbon's bosom and assured him I was prepared to be a model adopted mother-in-law."

"Oh, dear!" sighed Mrs. Clipston, "I do wish Archie hadn't boosted him into the club!"

"I'm very grateful to Archie. As his engagement to my niece was an assured event, I might have had to pull wires for him myself. Archie is a strong man and can stand the responsibility better than I could."

Mrs. Clipston continued to pursue her own train of thought. "You know I always can circumvent Archie if I take him in time. Everybody knows I'm no judge of horses, but I do know people, and it really does seem to me that Sullivan isn't such a bad sort in his way."

"Yes," admitted Mrs. Bill, who was nothing if not honest, "he'll do on the flat. I've reason to think he has his points."

"But a bore for you," said Mrs. Clipston, who was worldly and perfectly frank about it. "About the Farmers, for instance—it'll finish her with them."

Mrs. Bill blushed as the probe touched her secret sensitive spot.

"Have they made any sign?"

"None at all. They're in mourning this Winter, and the women—the important ones—are all on the other side."

Mrs. Clipston was silent for a moment with the significant silence of a resourceful woman. Presently her eye kindled and she brought forth a thought.

"My dear, I've not seen your niece. Is she pretty?"

"Very."

"Clever?"

"Altogether too clever for me, I'm afraid."

"Then I have the combination. You've taken this affair too meekly; you forget that you stand in the place of mother to the girl. Act like a sophisticated mother, not like a tame, cowed, Middle-Western parent. Assert yourself."

"How? Forbid the banns?"

"Nothing so crude. Opposition only inflames these young things. *Back another man!*"

"Who?"

Mrs. Clipston's matchmaking eye roved about the veranda and fell upon a slender, elegant figure in perfectly made whip-cord and boots. "There's your man," she said.

Win Winchester looked up as she spoke, with an acute smile on his thin, high-bred face, and pulled his mustache thoughtfully, almost as if he had a pre-science that they were speaking of him.

"He has enough money, his family is unexceptionable; he's clever; altogether the choicest prize we have in the way of an eligible young man. Between you and me, considering how he can go everywhere and is asked everywhere, I shouldn't be surprised if one day he

quite flew away from us. We must cage him."

Mrs. Ware began to see it. "He's just the kind of man to attract Lucy—she's very fastidious."

"He's perfect!" declared Mrs. Clipston, intoxicated by her own astuteness and eloquence.

"And just the sort to be a match for her—the little minx," mused Mrs. Bill.

"That is, if he sees anything in her."

"Sure to," said the other encouragingly, "if she's as you describe her. Win loves to be piqued. I know him."

Mrs. Bill was still thoughtful. "Isn't it possible there may be other entanglements? There was that woman with the big black eyes there was so much talk about—Mrs. Gordon Spencer."

"Pooh," observed Jane Clipston. "There are always Mrs. Gordon Spencers. It is our business to trump over them."

"And then poor Sullivan! It does seem a little treacherous to him."

"Have you any reason to feel an obligation not to be treacherous to Sullivan?"

Mrs. Ware had a reason, but she did not feel it necessary to mention it.

"Win will have to meet your niece in the course of time, anyway, both of them moving in the same orbit. You'll get an invitation tomorrow morning to dine with us, say Thursday week. The Crawfords, Colonel Hollis—I will make him happy by putting him next you—you, Lucy, Win and ourselves. Good!"

"Can you invite a girl without her fiancé?"

"Don't be old-fashioned, Gertrude Ware," spoke Mrs. Clipston briskly. "Do a thing and it's done. That's my method."

The conspirators separated, thinking themselves desperately artful. And then the horsemen began to mount, and Mrs. Bill signaled for Columbine and straightway banished from her mind everything but the appointed business of the day.

Like a Newfoundland pup untrained in the wiles of the world and resolved to think everybody his friend until a

dozen times proved an enemy, Mark Sullivan, as soon as he was mounted, came ambling up to Mrs. Ware. She was one of the enthusiasts who took the sport of "larking" seriously, and put her mount of the morning at the varied obstacles on the club grounds not so much to show off her riding as with a view to improving her horse's fencing. The weakling in the field, who has not confidence enough in himself to take a line of his own, always picks out a more accomplished horseman, and tacitly appoints himself that person's follower and pupil, usually very much to the annoyance of the elected pilot. This morning it was Mrs. Ware to whom Sullivan attached himself, perhaps unconsciously, for the earnest student of equestrianism thinks more of his occupation than of personalities. At any rate, whenever Mrs. Ware took a gate, or a wall or a hedge, Sullivan seemed to think he must take it, too; and the gate that Columbine had cleared with plenty to spare usually resounded under the clumsy hind feet of Sullivan's gray.

Mrs. Bill had to call out "'Ware heels!" so often that she grew quite nervous.

"I say, Mr. Sullivan," she finally broke out, "you really must be careful not to crowd me. Wait till I've landed and am out of the way before you let your beast take off. And do hold your hands down when you jump!"

Sullivan took her warning to heart, and waited so long next time that the gray had been pulled into a walk and naturally refused. In the struggle that ensued Sullivan was nearly thrown.

"Give him a touch of the spur!" advised Mrs. Bill, who was waiting her turn. "Let him see you're master."

"I don't like to," confessed Sullivan miserably; "I hate to hurt the poor old brute!"

Mrs. Bill rode with him away from the crowd a moment after. She was tired and had had enough for the morning. She was sorry for Sullivan, he looked so wretched and so conscious of his own inefficiency. Mrs. Ware was

weakly good-natured enough in the ordinary affairs of life, but as Diana she was relentless, and did not mind handing about any number of pieces of her mind.

"Mr. Sullivan," she began in a motherly voice, "I'm going to tell you something. You'll never be any good until you get better horses. I should say you weigh about a hundred and ninety—don't you? A man of your weight and build has got to have big ones, with good broad backs, well-ribbed up to stand the strain, and *leggy*. Now look at that one you're on—duck-legged, and not more than 15.2. Why don't you get horses that can carry you?"

Sullivan laughed miserably. "I don't know how to. The men are always telling me of good ones to buy, but when I get 'em they're all shins."

"Oh, the men!" pronounced Mrs. Bill contemptuously. "That's part of the game—sticking your friends with bad horses! Of course one has to be always buying; there's a dealer has moved his stables within two miles of my gates just so that he can sell nags to me!"

"I'm willing to pay enough," said Sullivan, "but I don't know one from another."

"That's obvious," thought she, but said aloud, "Suppose, Mr. Sullivan, you ride home with me for lunch. Never mind your clothes; you'll do as you are. Lucy, I dare say, will be wanting to see you."

His face brightened with such pleasure at the simple proposal, that Mrs. Ware, conscious of her own projected treachery, felt herself a cat; the more so as his outrageous performances of the morning had further steeled her resolution against him.

"Where," began Mrs. Ware briskly to the man who admitted them, "is Miss Parmer? Will you ask her to come down?"

"Miss Parmer has gone motoring, ma'am," replied the man discreetly. "A young gentleman called for her soon after you was gone, and she left word she wouldn't be back till dinner-time."

Mrs. Ware's jaw dropped, and so did Sullivan's. They were hopelessly in for a tête-à-tête luncheon, and it was a question which faced the situation with more dismay.

Mrs. Ware looked covertly at Sullivan, to see how he took the notion of Lucy's having another follower at hand. It was a new and decidedly unwelcome aspect of the situation to herself; but might be an old story to him for all the surprise he betrayed.

Did Lucy have them in every corner? And where would the seductions of the elegant Winchester be, if Lucy, in spite of rival attractions, still clove for all practical purposes to Sullivan?

VI

BEFORE luncheon was over, Mrs. Ware had to admit to herself that she now understood what Andy Crawford meant by calling Sullivan a good talker. Not at all brilliant, even a little lumbering in conversation as he was in his person, he had the straightforward, shrewd way of expressing himself, with occasional dashes of humor, that commends a man to his fellow-men. With a little encouragement he even had stories to tell, and it appeared, to Mrs. Ware's surprise, that he had lived through a more or less adventurous past, and could talk quite as easily of mining-camps and wheat-farming as of the Street. Unlike most women, Mrs. Ware, being herself fond of movement and excitement, enjoyed this kind of talk. Sullivan kept himself doggedly and steadily at it, thinking less, apparently, of his own chagrin at the defection of Lucy than of Mrs. Ware's possible boredom. She thought it was rather nice of him.

It was a little awkward, to be sure, to be discovered by Win Winchester, who had ridden over to get the head groom's famous prescription for sore backs, holding forth earnestly to Sullivan in the sacred precincts of the stable. There was a gleam of wicked humor in Win's eye, and he hung about just as long as he in decency could, indulging

himself in a series of double-edged remarks that were just pointed enough for Mrs. Bill's ear, and a little too subtle for Sullivan's. She was on pins and needles till he went, and not happy then, as she thought of the opportunities for his wit when next they should be alone. But Sullivan still hung on, whether in expectation of seeing Lucy or fascinated by the wealth of stable-lore that was poured into his ears only he could have revealed. Mrs. Bill at least could never be quite unhappy when given a free reign on her favorite topic.

"What an awful lot there is for a chap to know!" he cried ingenuously. "It's endless."

"So's the ocean," said Mrs. Bill, "but then you don't have to swim in the whole of it. Bless you, you'll soon pick up all you need to know; and for all practical purposes be as good a stableman as Barney here."

"Sure you will, sir!" added Barney, with true Irish hopefulness.

On Sullivan's face there came a flicker of consciousness so slight that only an uneasy conscience would have noticed it. But Mrs. Bill's conscience was uneasy, and her mind flew back to that wretched talk on the Glendale veranda when she had opined that men should not be taken into clubs who might be mistaken for the servants, and Win in his silly way had added that there would never be any danger of Sullivan's being mistaken for a groom.

He knew! There was no longer any doubt about it. He knew, and was determinedly acting as if he didn't either because he was an angel or a fool.

It was because her sore conscience still troubled her that Mrs. Bill presently treated herself to a flight of generosity. She had been showing Sir Donald to her guest as a sample of the type of horse he ought to search after for his stable, and Sullivan had promptly been stricken with a fervor of admiration highly gratifying to a proud owner. He was plainly in love with the animal, kept wandering to his stall after he was put back, and when

the praises of other favorites were sung, kept absent-mindedly reverting to the charms of the big black horse.

"I do wish I had him!" he declared. "If you were a man now, Mrs. Ware, I could ask you frankly if he hadn't a price."

"None of mine have," she returned, not at all offended. "But I'll tell you what I will do, Mr. Sullivan. I'll let you ride him at the very first meet. He'll show you a bit of sport that will get you in at the death in spite of yourself."

Sullivan was not so unsophisticated as to be unimpressed by the magnificence of the offer. He was quite awestruck. He put the thought from him, declaring he would be sure to founder the horse, or break his knees; but Mrs. Ware as warmly insisted, and the man finally accepted. "In for a penny, in for a pound," she thought to herself. "It is awful to be soft!"

There was almost an evening flush in the sky when they left the stable and walked toward the house. A motor was just drawing out of the porte-cochère, and Mrs. Ware caught a glimpse, as the driver cast one quick look back, of a thin, dark, boyish face smiling against a background of big, white teeth.

Lucy was standing at the door, waiting for them to come up.

It was the first time that Mrs. Bill had seen the two young people, conventionally to be called lovers, together. She watched them curiously. Lucy's manner, as she expected, was bored, teasing, patronizing, all at once. In his, however, was none of the awkward sheepishness she had somehow looked for. He was obviously very much in love with the alluring little creature, but his manner for all that was matter-of-fact and manly.

"I don't think you'd better come in," Lucy pouted, as his foot touched the first step.

"Just for a minute," he insisted, quietly. "I've something to give you."

"No, not for a minute!" she cried. "I don't want you to give me anything."

"It's—it's a ring," he said.

Poor man! He had been waiting the whole afternoon with the expectation of a scene of sentiment in his honest heart; thinking, no doubt, to slip the symbol of their betrothal on her pretty finger, with as much more as might be accorded him.

"Give it to me," said Lucy coldly.

He fumbled in his pocket, produced a prosaic little pasteboard box, and gave it to her without a word. Then he spoke his farewell and thanks to Mrs. Ware, and was off.

"You'll not play with that man forever," warned the voice of experience, speaking through the lips of Mrs. Bill.

"I don't want to," said Lucy crossly. "And if you're going to be nasty about my being away the very first time he came, please don't. It wasn't my fault. I didn't ask him to come."

"You're tired," said Mrs. Bill mildly, "or I should be very cross with you. I might be tempted to shake you."

Lucy began unexpectedly to laugh. Mrs. Bill hoodwinked she despised; Mrs. Bill open-eyed and severe she respected.

"May I ask who that very young man was?"

"That? Oh, only a cousin—Harry Parmer. A mere child."

"Old enough to be in love with you, I suppose?"

"Oh, dear, no! Only old enough to be tiresome."

They went in to tea together, silent and not at all amused with each other's society.

"You're very thoughtful today," remarked Lucy, with an impudent grin.

"I was just thinking, my dear, what a very valuable instructress for the young you must have been."

Lucy laughed impishly. "I was a very popular one. If the girls were nice enough to me, I would share my callers with them—the stupidest ones."

"Didn't you ever think about anything but men?"

"Not much else. What else *should* a girl think about?"

"I don't know," confessed Mrs. Bill helplessly. "There are old-fashioned

prejudices in favor of books and music and making the home happy."

"That sort of thing," pronounced Lucy, "is quite out of date.

VII

MR. HARRY PARMER, having entered the scene, continued to stay upon it. He was stopping indefinitely at a hotel in the immediate neighborhood of The Birches. It was odd what a number of people plunged recklessly out of their social orbits merely because a little yellow-haired creature happened to be added to the household of Mrs. Bill Ware.

Mrs. Bill was quite frankly aware, not that her niece was getting out of hand, but that she had never for a moment been in hand. In dealing with fractious horses, whom she had always been accustomed to nurse with the utmost art and gentleness through their frights and fits of temper, she had often wondered where she would find herself if ever it came to a question of strength rather than "hands"; if she ever found herself on an animal conscious of her weakness and his own diabolical possibilities. Lucy knew her own powers and the weakness of an adopted parent who had only caught her, as it were, on the flight out of girlish dependence into the haven of matrimony.

"I should have taken her in hand younger," thought Mrs. Bill, trying to make herself believe that there ever was a time when Lucy was in a state unformed enough for her to cope with.

These thoughts were forced upon her together with the prospect of having young Harry Parmer dangling about the house for the next week. He had called and made her acquaintance in a perfectly proper way, and she found herself, like an automatic toy hostess, inviting him to luncheon and dinner whenever Lucy pulled the strings.

Harry was a nice enough boy, and only objectionable as a Victim. He was the only son of a widowed mother, now abroad seeing a daughter through

the honeymoon period of a foreign alliance. Thus Harry had unfortunately come of age in comparative neglect; and until his mother should return and steer him into the proper path again, he had turned his back on the university where he was supposed to be acquiring a degree, and was chiefly engaged in getting rid of as much money as he could. He had charming manners, a sweet boyish face and a dog-like, affectionate nature. He was predestined to be somebody's tool; and Mrs. Bill, in the midst of her compassion, could only suppose that that somebody might be more dangerous than Lucy.

"Come on out!" urged Harry. "Do come, Lucy, and let's have a bit of speeding. All this indoor air stifles me."

Lucy hesitated. It was just after lunch and she had a dim notion this would be one of Mark Sullivan's afternoons. He had left the club and was living in town, but then he might be back again. She felt guiltily that her neglect of him was going rather beyond expedience, for she had no notion as yet of losing him altogether.

"I think it's rather nice to have you stifled, Harry. The outdoor air always goes to your head and makes you talk nonsense."

"Really, I won't say a thing that isn't sensible. If you'll come I'll let you drive every step of the way—there!"

On this condition Lucy consented, and, with her hands once on the wheel, took the emotional situation, as usual, into her own control. When Harry was moody and silent, with nothing to say, she ran the car gently and peacefully along, spark retarded and throttle almost closed; and when the outdoor sights and smells and her own nearness began to rouse him, she threw open the throttle and leaped madly ahead, till Harry had to hang on to his hat and beg her to stop. She had a pretty trick, when he became too eloquent, of jamming the machine around an unexpected corner, with a prodigious tooting of the horn.

"I hope you're having a good time!" he said at last, so sulkily that Lucy perceived a change in the temperature was necessary.

"How could we have a better?" she asked in her sweetest voice, looking for the first time that day caressingly into his face.

"You could drive slowly into this town we're just coming to," he suggested, immediately mollified, "so that I might run my eagle eye up and down the street for a restaurant or a hotel or a bun-shop, or some kind of joint where we might get out for an ice or a cup of tea."

"Very well."

"There's a lunch-room on the right-hand side directly beyond that big elm and the Chinese laundry. Will you try it?"

Lucy put her foot on the brake, begged him to stop the engine, and by the time she had reached the ground looked such an appealing, helpless bit of immature womanhood that you would have wondered how she dared set foot into an automobile at all.

The tea was rather nasty, the china was very thick and the ices were crossed off the card; but Harry drank off cup after cup of lukewarm tea as if he were grateful for the privilege. Then he set his jaw, folded his arms upon the table and began to talk.

"You're an awfully slippery customer, Lucy, but there's one thing you've got to explain to me before we go back. Are you or are you not seriously intending to marry that awful bounder, Mark Sullivan?"

"I'm engaged to him. Look—that's the ring. He brought it down day before yesterday."

"I see it," said Harry gloomily, "and just one year ago I saw one of mine on that identical spot—not quite so big as an electric light, maybe, but intended to convey the same idea."

"We were mere children, Harry."

"You aren't much older now."

"But you're a great deal younger."

"Well, you sha'n't marry him! It will disgrace the family. You're a Farmer, after all. I'll cable to grand-

mother—she'll come home and stop it."

Lucy's sleepy eyes woke up and flashed fire. "Do it if you dare!"

"I will," he repeated sullenly, "unless you give me your promise to break the engagement."

Lucy tapped her foot, laughed contemptuously and looked away in vague longing for some eye to catch from hers the secret of her sense of the boy's absurdity.

"And I won't stir a step from here until you promise."

"Won't you?"

"Not a step," repeated Harry, very proud of his new-found determination.

Lucy slowly rose to her feet, and thoughtfully began to draw on her gloves.

"Well—if you'll go over to that counter and get me some chocolates, I'll think about promising."

Harry eyed her suspiciously for a moment, then lifted his chin doggedly and walked to the other end of the shop.

Lucy gathered her skirts together and slipped through the door. Harry, dashing madly out upon the street some two minutes later, had the pleasure of seeing his own car with a little lady at the wheel, careering back in the direction from which it had come. He waited a minute, two minutes, sure that it could be only a joke, and when full fifteen were gone, turned about and made for the railroad station, a tear of boyish rage and disappointment oozing pitifully from his eye.

VIII

"WHAT's the matter?" asked the gentleman in tweed and walking-gaiters. He had turned out of a wood-path into the road just as the big blue machine had given its last choking gasp and settled down pathetically into a mud-hole. He came swinging up to the car, with the obvious intention of doing his best to relieve its distress, but with no addition of excitement to his languid yet competent manner.

"Is there anything I can do?" he suggested pleasantly. The Irish terrier at his side barked interrogatively as if he were echoing the question.

The lady in the car bent a moist and seductive blue eye upon him. "I don't know," she confessed in appealing tones. "She's all hot and she won't crank. Do you understand motors?"

The gentleman was already removing his gloves. He, too, failed to crank, and so began a series of expeditions into hidden and secret places, prying, punching, examining; while the lady took the opportunity, leaving mechanical troubles to her rescuer, of observing him attentively as he worked, appraising his hands, his manner, his clothes.

"Your gasoline tank's empty," he said at length, with a smile.

"That stupid boy!" cried Lucy.

"Fortunately the landscape is conveniently dotted with garages," he suggested. "There is one, I believe, just at the foot of this hill. If you'll let me push her to the top, I believe we can coast and lay in a new supply."

The strange gentleman was quite right. Everything happened as he had predicted. The car was easily pushed to the top of the hill, rolled down of itself, and stopped before the garage, quite providentially placed at the natural terminus of the coast. The gasoline tank was filled, and Lucy might start for home whenever she pleased.

"How can I thank you?" asked Lucy, with a long look, succeeded by a drooping of the lashes.

The strange gentleman pleased her eye and appealed to her instincts for sophistication and elegance. His manner was easy and took things for granted, he spoke with a charming semi-English accent, his glance was direct, quizzical, a little impudent.

He smiled patronizingly upon her innocence. "If you like," he suggested in the kind, disarming tone that men of the world use to very little girls, "I will drive you home."

"Oh, if you would!" Her tone bespoke anxiety fleeing from his presence like clouds before the sun.

"Where to?" he asked when they were safely on their way. "Give me your commands."

"To Mrs. Ware's, The Birches, in Glendale. I live there. I'm Mrs. Ware's niece."

"Indeed!" observed the gentleman, in tempered pleasure and surprise. "Mrs. Ware's much-heralded niece! Oh, I've heard a lot about you. Mrs. Ware's a friend of mine. My name—possibly you've heard it—is Winthrop Winchester."

Lucy greeted the announcement with pleased and childish interest, and when Winchester was not looking, drew herself back upon the seat, closed her eyes, and shrugged her shoulders in secret glee.

When they drew under the portecochère of The Birches, the darkness was falling and the lanterns were lighted. Winchester's languid and patronizing manner was gone. He had forgotten that he had at first taken her for a little girl, and he held her hand eagerly and lingeringly at parting.

"Next week, then," he was saying, "at the Clipstons'."

She nodded. "And don't forget my instructions," she breathed hurriedly. "Take the machine into the garage of the Glendale Inn, and don't say anything to anybody—particularly don't breathe to a soul that you've met me. We're to be introduced, you understand, by Mrs. Clipston."

He promised, in humorous sympathy with the feminine diplomacy that was just a little beyond his comprehension.

Mrs. Bill, of course, was allowed to suppose that as Harry Parmer had taken her away, Harry Parmer had brought her home.

"And what," she could not forbear saying at dinner, "has become of Mr. Sullivan?"

"Mr. Sullivan? Oh, he's gone back to town."

"In a rage, I dare say."

"Not at all. I've had the nicest letter from him. He seems to be safe and leading a virtuous life."

"And yet he stops in town. I'm glad he has so much reserve."

"Ah!" said Lucy, with a reminiscent flash of admiration for her fiancé, "that's just it. You never can quite tell. Some day he'll go off like a cannon-ball, and I sha'n't have a word of warning!"

Mrs. Bill looked at her niece with a little shudder of distaste. She did not yet quite know how to understand Lucy's little displays of the sensational; and the expression of cherubic peace on the pretty little face outraged her ideas of decency.

IX

AT Mrs. Clipston's table the only person not completely happy and comfortable was Mrs. Clipston herself. Twenty years of eager, enthusiastic and successful dinner-giving had not yet bred in her a complete confidence in the results. It had become her habit, every time the plates were changed, to watch under downcast lids until her lord, who sat opposite, should have essayed the first bite; and then she would raise her eyes and mutely appeal to him for his decision. Then there would fly back a glance, imperceptible to everyone but her who waited for it, which said: "Satisfactory," or "Very good," or "Couldn't be better, my dear!"

Whereupon Mrs. Clipston would lean back a fraction of an inch in her chair and remark to Andy Crawford, who sat on her left:

"How very warm it is tonight!" or "Do you think we shall have a frost tomorrow?" or any one of those ready-made trifles that come from a comforted spirit and temporary absence of intellectual activity.

The "Couldn't be better" signal had been oftenest flown this evening, wherefore Mrs. Clipston, by the time the ices were reached, was able to relax, look about her, and contribute to the flow of talk some observations that had all the ear-marks of a little mental effort upon them.

Beyond Colonel Hollis, who sat on Mrs. Clipston's right, and next to Mr. Clipston, was Mrs. Ware, displaying her plump shoulders and pearl-en-

circled neck in dazzling relief against a gown of black lace. She had her niece and Win Winchester directly under her maternal observation. Lucy was bewitching in the white frock she had given her; and as always when she had been able to do anything for her niece, good-natured Mrs. Bill felt for her momentarily all the tenderness she had hoped would be chronic.

Her mind was at peace tonight. She liked being at the Clipstons', for she was fond of both of them; the Crawfords were her old friends, and the mere presence of Colonel Hollis ministered to her vanity and made her feel conscious of being still a young and attractive woman.

He was no inconsiderable figure in the social life of the Glendale hunting colony, was Colonel Hollis, and his admiration was worth something to Mrs. Bill. He had been the Master of Hounds for the last ten years, which in hunting annals is a long, long time. He loved the dogs, was jealous of their fame and would sail to England at a moment's notice (out of the hunting season) to find a pair who might improve the breed. He was a spare, smallish, weathered-looking man; and though he had grown children, was as active as a boy. He loved country life, had the largest and finest place in Glendale, and lived on it the year around.

Every attractive woman who has not altogether renounced matrimony has in the back of her mind the image of some faithful man whom she might, or believes she might, some time marry. Colonel Hollis was Mrs. Ware's reserve string. Although she had no present intention of taking unto herself a husband, she felt she might have him whenever she could bring herself to it, and the consciousness was somehow a comfortable one. Their acquaintance had dated from her first taking up her residence in the neighborhood, was founded on her sympathetic readiness to listen to the exploits of hounds, and to contribute to their upkeep, and kept alive by their mutual interests, plus Mrs. Bill's undeniable feminine charms,

"Do tell me, Colonel Hollis," said Mrs. Ware, observing how his keen blue eye fell on the yellow-haired girl across the way, "what you think of my niece."

"By Jove, Mrs. Bill," said the colonel—for he was one of those who habitually and openly took the liberty with her name—"by Jove, Mrs. Bill, that's the kind of girl to set the young fellows crazy. I know 'em." The colonel was one of those chivalrous old fellows who always seem to believe that the story-books rightly attribute a supernatural power to the beauty of young women, and that young men exist only to be its sport.

"She is," agreed Mrs. Bill ruefully. "She's just that kind."

"You'll not keep her on your hands long. I predict she'll be engaged before the frost's out of the ground—and maybe before it's in."

"She's engaged now! To Mark Sullivan."

Hollis looked incredulous.

"What! that fellow who always tries to ride on top of hounds? He's not good enough for her—though I must be fair to him. A man who can send such a cheque as I had from him this morning for the upkeep of hounds is bound to be a good and bountiful provider."

And here, as was only to be expected, they lost the scent of Lucy on a cross-wind; and from their corner was to be heard nothing but Beauty and Bright-eyes and Sweetheart and Sancho, the beneficial effects of hard riding on a field of winter wheat, and the degeneracy of foxes.

"What, Miss Lucy," said Andy Crawford, with the paternal air of the newly-married man, "you don't ride?"

"Don't ride!" echoed from around the curve Mrs. Crawford, who, having defied and tormented Andy before marriage, now took pleasure in humbly echoing his lightest words.

"Don't listen to them, my dear," said Mrs. Clipston. "It's quite possible to be born, marry and die without the intervention of a horse,

though you can't get these people to admit it."

"It wouldn't have been possible for us," cried Andy, stating a fact that was known to them all. "Our horses fairly bullied us into matrimony. Got so used to going together that though we tried our best to quarrel and part forever they wouldn't let us."

Jean Crawford's quiet laugh echoed her husband's.

"I'm afraid of horses," said Lucy, with her innocent look.

("Fiddlesticks!" thought Mrs. Bill to herself. "She overdoes that baby glance!")

"You have the higher courage," declared Clipston. "I would sooner rope and break a man-eater than make that plain, unvarnished statement in the united presence of your aunt and Colonel Hollis—not to mention such negligible trifles as Crawford and myself."

Win bent toward her, when the wind of conversation had begun to blow toward another quarter. "Let *me* teach you to ride," he said, his indolent eyes almost sparkling.

Lucy, innocent Lucy, who was afraid of horses, bent a critical look upon him. "Your attitude is too devoted," she murmured. "Just raise your head a bit, look natural—that is, bored—and try to seem interested in cracking your nuts. That's better. Thank you."

"Why is there such a premium on being bored? That's the third time you've recommended it."

"I'll tell you after dinner," said Lucy, raising her head to return Colonel Hollis's glance of kindly, paternal interest with one of adoring, infantile trust.

While Lucy and Jean Crawford whiled away the manless interval at the piano, Mrs. Ware gratefully sank upon the same divan that held the portly figure of her friend Mrs. Clipston.

"The charm isn't working," she breathed. "He hardly spoke to her at dinner. She spent all her time flirting with Andy Crawford under Jean's nose, and ogling the colonel across the table."

"Don't be discouraged."

"I'm not sure that I am. Maybe things will jog on better as they are. Poor Sullivan! We are all being so nasty to him that I really feel myself getting fond of him. I'm not sure now that he isn't a better sort than Win—or Lucy, either, though I can't help being fond of her too, in a way."

"What is the matter with you, Gerty? I thought you seemed quite happy at dinner?"

"I was, so long as I was eating. This after-dinner period is like twilight, or the wee, small hours, for searching out your secret griefs."

"Secret griefs! A woman with your freedom, your income, your good looks and your perfect seat!"

"My perfect seat is no use to me to-night; I'm used to my income, my looks are going off, and my freedom—" Mrs. Ware paused.

"What about your freedom?"

"That's it! I believe I have too much of it!" Mrs. Bill looked surprised at herself as the discovery came slowly from her lips.

"Marry! It's the only way to lose your freedom. An adopted daughter who is capable of marrying and turning you into an adopted grandmother at any moment isn't enough of a tie. You want children of your own. Yes, my dear, I've long thought that marriage was the only thing for you." Mrs. Clipston, having no children of her own, seemed always to feel herself sent to assist vicariously in increasing the population.

A dreamy look came into Mrs. Bill's honest black eyes, and spread slowly over her rosy countenance. She put her fan to her lips in silent thought.

"Marry whom?"

"Well, you could marry Hollis. But if I were you, I'd look for someone nearer your own age."

Mrs. Bill snapped her fan open, and waved it vigorously to and fro. The men were coming in, and she looked thoughtfully at Hollis as he approached, her mind full of a secret questioning.

The Crawfords had "gone on," the Clipstons, Colonel Hollis and Mrs. Ware

were safely started at bridge, and Win and Lucy were free to seek out any romantic nook they might choose. They chose the conservatory.

"And now," said Win, leaning back and taking in her face and person with the gratified look of the connoisseur who does not often find the rare amusement suited to his taste, "why was I to look so bored at dinner?"

"In the first place, not to give away the fact that we had met before."

"Are two meetings necessary to banish boredom?"

"And to prove to Mrs. Clipston and my beloved aunt that they are not going to be successful in throwing me at your head!"

Even Win felt a little sensation at this bit of frankness.

"But, my dear Miss Parmer, how do you know that they've any such idea?"

"My dear Mr. Winchester, listen to my reasoning. My aunt is not as well satisfied as I am with my engagement to Mr. Mark Sullivan. As she has shown no strong opposition to it in public, I am forced to believe, from what I know of my own sex, that she is probably working against it in private. My aunt Bill's not a fool, though at first I did take her for one. Now here we are at a dinner—all of them more or less old and settled but you and me. We go in together—my aunt and her pal Mrs. Clipston exchanging meaning glances over our heads. I am known to be a coquette; you are probably"—her eyes questioned his—"a flirt. What more do you want?"

"My word," said he, "but you're frank!"

"It's my dissipation," she returned. "I am always frank when I meet anyone whom I think it would be impossible to deceive."

He bowed his thanks. "And are you completely frank with me?"

"Are you completely able to see through my last shred of pretense? If you are, don't be afraid."

"But to come back to the question of boredom. I see and applaud your noble purpose in thwarting the match-makers. In public I will stand by

you. But is it absolutely necessary to keep on the mask in private?"

"Ah, that depends on you. You are a free man. I am dictating conduct to you, not feelings."

"My feeling is that you are the most bewitching woman I ever met."

He leaned forward deliberately and took her hand. As deliberately she lifted his and firmly placed it in a more decorous situation. "I did not say you were free to do that kind of thing," she said coolly.

"One is always free to try," he returned, as unabashed. "I wonder if I really do understand you."

"I wonder, too," said Lucy, with her very wickedest look.

X

BUT where is sentiment on the first hunting morning in October? Tucked away in manly breasts and beneath snug habits, perhaps, ready for use at more propitious moments, but for this one quite forgotten.

The air is as crisp and snapping as it can get and yet be innocent of the dreadful frost. The meet is at Colonel Hollis's, who, that he may be ungrudgingly hospitable, does not go in for lawns at all; but keeps all his grounds in a semi-wild state that cannot suffer from trampling hoofs.

There is a field of thirty this morning, fringed about with timid spectators in phaetons and motors. The fashion of pink for active service has never established itself at Glendale, and Colonel Hollis in the club's coat of green is the only exception to whip-cord and boots and Oxford mixtures. But a jolly scene of bustle and expectancy does not depend upon getting yourself up like a sporting print in an imported red coat. Men on fresh and lively hunters try to hold them still long enough to pay the expected compliments to lady riders. There is a lot of letting in and letting out of curb-chains. Ladies, who are a bit nervous before the sport begins, are led to believe that their stirrups are too long or too short. Gentlemen, in the

same state, are hopping off and swinging themselves on at the slightest excuse.

Colonel Hollis, whose heart is with the other green coats of huntsman and whipper-in in the neighboring little wood, which bounds the western end of his estate, keeps as near as he dares to it with an ear cocked for the music of the first cry. He knows his duty is with the field, but there is an awful longing in his heart to see how his green hounds are drawing the wood.

"It is all nonsense," he confides to Mrs. Bill, who hovers in the same vicinity, fresh as the morning, beautifully turned out and mounted. "It's a silly English custom. How am I to know how to breed hounds unless I can see them at work?"

"There should be a deputy master," says Mrs. Bill, with a cautious eye on Columbine's ear.

"There should be a mistress of hounds," suggested Colonel Hollis, slyly. "A master is like a parson. They should refuse him a parish until he's married."

Mrs. Bill returns his look frankly, and laughs a little.

"One who knows the field and the country and can live with hounds. The handsomest woman in the field and the best rider."

"Where will you find such a prodigy?"

"I know a Diana who's all that but the title—what do you say, Mrs. Bill?"

If a woman can drop to a womanly modesty in riding-togs while waiting nervously for hounds to give tongue, Mrs. Bill achieved the miracle. "Are you serious?" she asked softly.

"Never more so, by Jove!"

Mrs. Bill shook her head gently. "This is a fireside conversation, colonel; I can't rise to it now."

"Nor I! I am beginning with the hunting end. Let me call tomorrow to pursue the fireside advantages!"

Mrs. Bill did not forbid him and looked after him quite fondly as he rode away to greet a newcomer. Then she whipped her own horse about and was face to face with something she had been rather dreading to meet, namely,

Mark Sullivan on her own Sir Donald. The horse had been sent over to the club stable the night before. Sullivan's manner, when he spoke, was absent and pre-occupied, but whether because he felt the responsibility of riding one of her best horses, or because he had other things on his mind, was not apparent.

"Have you seen Lucy?" she asked. "She's over there in Harry Farmer's motor."

"Oh, yes, thank you," he returned. "I've just been talking to her—I say, have I got his curb-chain right?"

She smiled tolerantly. "Quite right, I should say. Just ride him straight at everything, and don't funk. Good luck!"

And then, to her relief, the huntsman's horn sounded the welcome signal of "Gone away!" and the usual scramble began, quite as if everybody had gathered peacefully for tea and were tremendously surprised at being called off to follow a fox.

Mrs. Bill, while they were fussing and fuming for a good position, slipped neatly around the corner of the wood, hopped the stone wall that marked Colonel Hollis's boundary, jumped the brook, and was in the same field with hounds, Sullivan, clumsy fellow, pounding away at her heels.

The first field, as Mrs. Bill well knew, would weed out a few badly mounted riders, for it was fallow ploughed land, heavy and sticky. Once passed, if the fox was a game one and hounds ran well, they could settle down for a fast thing on a drier upland. Sir Donald was getting down nobly to his ride, going better, indeed, than her own Columbine, who was a bit light for this sort of work, so that Sullivan jumped the next fence ahead of her.

"Nicely done!" she called out in encouragement, as she swung past him.

And then began one of the quickest and longest runs in the history of the Glendale Club. Fifty minutes without a break they ran; and Mrs. Bill jumped and galloped, squeezed through gates, and scratched through brush, almost unconscious of what she did, only alive to the blood that tingled in her

cheek and the joy of life that sang in her head.

They killed just this side of Bird's Hill, and Mrs. Bill, letting the weary Columbine hang her head under the slack rein, drew a long breath and was glad that she was alive. The brush was hers—but then it always was—for of the half-dozen who were in at the death she was the only woman.

"I say!" she cried, struck by a sudden thought as the huntsman was handing her up the brush, "when did we lose Sullivan and my Sir Donald?"

Hollis shook his head. "I don't play nurse to Sullivan."

"I gave him a lead twenty minutes back," said Bob Hilary. "He was up and going strong."

"He failed to negotiate beyond Ridge Farm," supplemented Andy Crawford. "Haven't seen him since."

"Anybody see him fall?"

Nobody had, and as far as the evidence went, Sullivan and Sir Donald, though not present, were still intact.

They rode back slowly, out of consideration for the weary nags, as full of noble satisfaction as if an empire had been saved, going over the incidents of the run and choosing easy ways. Mrs. Ware was just walking her mare through a gap in a rail fence into a little lane that ran between two fields, and was idly noting the effect of sunlight on withering barberries and ghostly asters, when someone shouted to her from a little group of men some hundred feet down the lane.

"What's the matter?" asked Hollis, too far behind to see what the fuss was about.

"I can't make out," returned Mrs. Bill. "There are half-a-dozen men gathered about something and they seem to be warning us off."

At this moment a lad detached himself from the group and came running toward them, shouting, "Keep back! keep back!"

"Nonsense! I've no notion of keeping back. Come on, colonel, and let's see what's up."

But the colonel, with the masculine instinct of keeping women from prying

into mysteries that may not be good for them, put a detaining hand on her bridle. "I think there's a horse down."

As he spoke the group drew to one side and a sharp shot rang out.

"Shooting some poor old screw, I dare say," said Hollis carelessly.

A sick apprehension stole into the horsy heart of Mrs. Bill. She touched Columbine with the spur, and raced in excitement up to the group, the colonel after her.

A rough-looking fellow whom Mrs. Ware recognized as a local veterinary was engaged in cleaning his pistol. Two of the group who had been mounted were getting up again. On the bank in stupid dejection sat Mark Sullivan; and in the prostrate form that the separating group left visible Mrs. Ware knew all too well the noble black bulk of Sir Donald.

A dead horse is a sickening sight. In the attitude he was never meant to take, his proportions are lost; his neck is thin, his barrel too large; and in his mighty frame, relaxed forever, there is a tragic pathos.

"It was Mrs. Ware's horse," went in whispers round the group, quite awestruck by the too dramatic combination of events. The vet stepped up to her side and began an elaborate explanation. "I'm sure you'll agree we done right, ma'am. There wasn't nothin' else to do. The gent takes him over the fence from the field on the other side of the road, raps too hard with his hind legs, brings him down in front and breaks both forelegs. He'd been lying here half-an-hour before I got here; the gent, not having a knife nor a pistol, and being, between you and me, a little green—"

"That will do," interrupted Colonel Hollis shortly, for Mrs. Bill was going quite white. "Let's ride on, if you please," he said to her, adding as an afterthought, "my dear!"

Mrs. Bill was glad enough to be moving. She felt a bit faint, and two tears were stealing from her big round eyes. She had not looked at Sullivan; and indeed he had only got himself to his

feet when she and Hollis were well down the lane.

"Well, upon my word," cried Hollis, exploding at last, "all I can say is—damn the fellow!"

Mrs. Bill smiled mistily through her tears. "Thank you, colonel," she said.

XI

WHEN the news of Sir Donald's untimely end reached the stable, there was among the grooms that feeling of melancholy satisfaction that such an event is wont to create in the breasts of stablemen, especially when no shadow of blame for it can attach to them. Barney and Tom sucked their pipes over it with gusto, prolonging the sad pleasure to the utmost limit with anecdotes of the virtues and prowess of the dead favorite.

"Two thousand, if a cent, the missus paid for 'im," pronounced Barney, mournfully wagging his head.

"A-a-a-h," Tom echoed his superior with an inward groan, "and not a cent too much."

"Not a cent," agreed Barney, attacking his pipe with drawn face and a lack-luster eye. "And there his nose was pointed for death the minute he was after leaving this stable for Sullivan's beyant. Ride! the lad can no more ride than yourself can, Tom. Not a bit more! Not a bit more!"

Tom, a little nettled at this classification, searched about in his mind for a new aspect of the situation. "Well, annyway, there's wan less of 'em for me to be currying down."

"Wan less? Wan less, is ut? Yes, don't be havin' your wits wid yez the way I do, me lad. Did ye never notice how the missus will be buyin' a new horse every now and again, the way you and me would be takin' a drink—to cheer her up like, and put a taste of heart into her? Do yez look out, Tom. It'll be two at least she'll be needin' to make her forget the likes of Sir Donald."

"I wouldn't wonder," admitted Tom, quite put down, "I wouldn't wonder if it was true for yez, Barney."

"Oh, Lord!" exclaimed Mrs. Bill as she came to the end of a lingering toilet for luncheon.

"What's the matter, ma'am?" asked the middle-aged maid who was assisting at the ceremony.

"Go find Miss Parmer, Bennett," directed Mrs. Bill, without revealing the secret of her sudden consternation.

"Miss Parmer has gone motoring, ma'am, and won't be home till after luncheon."

Mrs. Bill looked angrily at her own image in the glass, gave a vicious jab at her hair, swished out of the door and down the stairs into the drawing-room.

"I thought so," she pronounced aloud in gloomy triumph over her own discomfiture.

On the corner of a couch sat the cause of all her woes, Mark Sullivan. He had a perfect right to be there, as Mrs. Bill had invited him for luncheon the day before; and he was one of those uncomfortably punctilious men who never forget, or know enough to pretend to forget, an engagement. Moreover, he had not taken advantage of that convention which allows gentlemen to lunch in their riding-clothes after a morning in the field. The garments of battle had been put aside, from a secret sensitiveness, perhaps, to their now unpleasant association, and Sullivan was scrubbed and brushed, re-attired and made over into such an image of respectability as somehow whetted Mrs. Bill's rage at him.

"I suppose you hate the sight of me," he said as he rose.

"I do. I hate every inch of you," returned Mrs. Bill, with vigor.

"Perhaps I'd no business to come here."

"Not at all! The only satisfaction the world could afford me at the present moment is the pleasure of hating you as much as I like at short range."

"I enjoy being hated. I can't hate myself hard enough to make any impression."

"You're a monster!"

"I'm a brute, an outcast, the scum of the earth!"

"Exactly. Sit down, brute, and let me revile you at ease."

Sullivan sat down, strengthened enough by her frankness to summon up a rueful smile.

Mrs. Bill pounced upon it. "How dare you smile when you've killed my best horse? Don't attempt to argue with me. Very likely you have the impudence to be thinking you've only had an accident that might have happened to anybody."

"I'm quite sure there's not another such thundering fool alive as I am."

"Perhaps you expect me to be generous. Perhaps you think I should do as the lady in the story does when someone breaks a Sévres cup and she breaks another to show how little she minds! Maybe I should have broken Columbine's legs in a sweet spirit of generosity—well, I haven't any generosity."

"For the first time I feel obliged to contradict you."

"Don't you dare!" snapped Mrs. Bill, who, now that she could give a free rein to her tongue, was almost beginning to enjoy herself.

"Dare I ask how much he cost you?"

"Nineteen hundred."

"If I may, I'll send you a cheque. Or perhaps," he suggested, with a vision of easing his conscience by spending twice the sum, "you'd let me look about to see if I could find an animal for you, that, in my judgment, was as good."

"Thank you, I'd rather have the cheque." Her smile was bland, imperturbable, impudent.

This *was* a facer. Sullivan stood up under it grimly, and Mrs. Bill began to think she had had her fill of being nasty.

"You haven't asked for Lucy yet," she observed.

"I'd forgotten her. I'll ask now, since you remind me. Where is she?"

"Gone motoring with Harry Parmer."

"She seems to have a habit of going off with that young man when I'm expected."

"I intended that point to strike you. It's your own fault, Mr. Sullivan."

You haven't the faintest idea of the rights and duties of a fiancé."

"I am glad to have so valuable an ally," he said, with a queer gleam in his eye.

"Oh, dear, he sees through me!" thought Mrs. Bill, and was glad it was time to lead the way to luncheon.

Lucy came back, after all, before they had finished their coffee.

"What have you two been fussing about?" she asked Sullivan when they were alone. "Aunt Bill looks as if she'd been crying, and you as if you'd had a beating."

He told her, adopting a more serious tone than he had used with Mrs. Bill, before whom he did not wish to show all his feelings lest they make him out a humble, meaching sort of man. From Lucy he was willing to have a little feminine compassion. He wanted to hear that he wasn't such a clumsy fencer; to have her shudder a little in reminiscent alarm; to have her anxious lest some of his bones might have been broken, after all.

But when the tale was told from beginning to end, Lucy asked: "Is that all?" and then went off into peal after peal of ribald laughter.

"This is womanly sympathy!" declared Mark Sullivan, very much put out.

"It's *my* womanly sympathy," said Lucy. "And so you and Aunt Bill have been sitting here drawing long faces for heaven knows how long, just because you've killed a horse she was perfectly able to lose and you are perfectly able to pay for!"

Sullivan looked a little shocked. "It was a horse in a thousand. Your aunt was particularly attached to him."

"Well, my dear Mark, the more fool you for riding him."

"I don't like the way you talk to me, Lucy," he said firmly, after a pause.

"You don't seem to like anything I do."

"It's true. And it grows increasingly difficult to separate you from your actions."

Lucy nonchalantly held up the third finger of her left hand. "Take it off!" she said.

"Do you insist?"

"I think it's time our engagement was over."

"Suppose," he suggested, rising, "that we give it a vacation for a while—rusticate it, as it were?"

"Very well—and all about Aunt Bill and her silly old horses! She is a goose about them, Mark."

"Mrs. Ware is in earnest about everything she does, and I admire her for it. She's an open, generous, kind-hearted woman! I wish there were more like her—good-bye."

In solitude Lucy's eyes grew rounder and rounder. "An honest, generous, kind-hearted woman! And Aunt Bill only thirty-three, after all! Funny I never thought of it before—that engagement remains *in statu quo*, Mr. Mark Sullivan!"

XII

Down the Brook Road, some two miles beyond Mrs. Ware's gates, were the stables of a professional gentleman, who lived to buy horses very cheap and sell them very dear. He was a stoutish, red-faced, bow-legged little man, who wore a low-crowned derby hat very much over his right eye, tight cinnamon-colored trousers, and, when the weather was inclined to be cold, a full-skirted overcoat with a double row of large buttons down the front.

Jim Niles at the farthest limit of human vision could not be taken for other than a horseman. In his earlier youth he had been a jockey, and what few points he had not learned there had been gathered together in a long career of hanging about stables and race-tracks. In spite of his large prices, or perhaps because of them, and in spite of his supernatural knowledge of the weak and strong points of the horse, Jim Niles's patrons had learned that in the main he was to be trusted; and that it was on the whole safer to

buy a good animal at a large price from him than to trust one's individual power of divination in an auction-room or ordinary sales-stable. So whenever word went abroad that Jim had a prize, that prize was pretty sure, in the course of time, to be snapped up by one or another of the Glendale colony.

There was a horse in Jim's stable now, one Sultan, out of Empress by Elector, that looked to Jim fit to make history.

He was a thoroughbred, was Sultan, a bay, about 15.2, with a small, keen face and bulging eyes, delicately and finely made, and yet showing for all his dainty build a muscular neck, strong, long-armed shoulders, widish hips, vigorous legs, and feet not too small for service. He was a nervous animal, jumped about when not at work, and could hardly be still; and yet, for all that, Jim pronounced him a "lady's horse" either because he doubted the temper of the beast under a man's clumsy hands, or because he had an eye on certain ladies who might be supposed to want a hunter.

It was all because of the disquieting presence of Sultan in Jim Niles's stable that Andy Crawford, for the first time in his wedded career, purposely missed the last train down to Glendale and telegraphed to his wife that it was an accident.

The only trouble with the Crawford combination was that while Andy made a good income at his profession—he was an architect and worked hard—Jean had a better from the profession of her late lamented father—he had been a promoter. Because Andy was a good fellow and recently married it galled him that he could not possibly afford to give Jean the presents she was perfectly able to make herself. Jean was tactful and in love with her husband, and so usually successful in combatting her own tendency to lavishness; but she *had* let drop a hint that she thought it would be difficult to live much longer without Sultan. Andy agreed with her; she had only one horse fit for cross-country work, and Sultan would make a perfect second.

He wanted Jean to have the horse; but he wanted to buy it for her himself. He turned it over in his mind, and decided that the only thing for him to do was to buy stocks for a rise. And having done so, Crawford found himself in the short space of a week decidedly on the wrong side of the market and in a very tight place.

He was turning over the magazines at his club in town, cursing his luck and trying in vain to think of a way out, when he caught the eye of Mark Sullivan, who was in the same manner solacing an unwelcome leisure.

Sullivan had no engagement, was bored with the club atmosphere and willing to sit over a Scotch and a cigar; so before long Andy found himself pouring out the story of his troubles into Sullivan's not unsympathetic ear. Sullivan listened, nodding intelligently, and when Andy was finished, immediately attacked the reconstruction problem with ease and acumen, and from a standpoint of familiarity with affairs and the "inside" that made poor Andy see what an ass he had been to act on mere "tips" and snap judgments. There was a fluency, a logical way of developing an argument, a neatness and cogency of illustration in the working of Sullivan's mind that compelled the admiration of his fellow-men.

And this was where Andy sent the telegram which registered his perfidious intention of missing the midnight train.

"That," said Sullivan in conclusion, "is about the course I should follow; and if you'll just transfer your account to us I'll keep an eye on it, or my partner will, which comes to the same thing. I'm expecting to be away a few weeks myself."

Andy breathed his thanks and his relief.

Sullivan yawned and looked at his watch.

"I say, suppose you come around to my diggings. I can give you a better cigar and a better Scotch than we've had here, and a bed if you get too overcome to toddle back."

Andy was in a state of gratitude that made Sullivan's suggestion law; so the two men pulled on their overcoats, and walked down the avenue to a side-street where was the apartment house honored by the residence of Sullivan.

It was a quiet sort of place where Sullivan lived, without the gilt, the onyx, the superfluous attendance that one rather associates with the prosperous broker. A quietly-clad inside man let them in, with an air of respectful tolerance of their appearance after midnight; and as the elevator was not running at an hour apparently considered unseemly in that corner of the world, the men walked up a couple of flights on boards that creaked under the subduing velvet strips.

Sullivan unlocked his own door, switched on the light in his sitting-room and threw a log or two on the still smoldering fire.

"A little funeral downstairs, eh? I'm from Massachusetts myself, and that sort of thing means peace to me. Sit down while I rustle some cheerfulness."

Andy rather preferred looking about. He had a professional interest in the construction of rooms and their decoration, and Sullivan's at the very first glance pleased him. The long, low windows, the excellent proportion between the height and length of the room, the dull, old rugs, the inevitable long book-cases, the prints and the subtle, satisfying harmonies of red and blue appealed to his professional taste.

Sullivan had some very nice pictures, too, of the kind that can be bought only because of a personal yearning, not on a dealer's recommendation. They were mostly old color prints and the frequent occurrence of smithies, lolling dogs, patient cart-horses and smock-frocked yokels betrayed a weakness for Morland and his school. Nor was the sporting print lacking, with its clustering red coats, its impossible fences, its lively hounds with their sterns up. Andy took in these with lively appreciation.

All he said was, in the jargon of his kind: "You're rather snug here."

Sullivan was busy setting forth a little table by the fireside. "It's comfortable enough," he returned.

"You've got a couple of moose-heads, I see," said Andy, to whose taste they did not exactly appeal.

"Ah! Childish taste!" admitted Sullivan laughing. "They represent so much hard work I can't bear to give 'em up. If you will shoot 'big game, you've got to have the evidence hanging about you—it's part of the disease—lucky it isn't the fashion to embalm big fish, or I'd have a whole museum here of those I've killed. You've got to have the disabilities of a pursuit along with the advantages."

The homelike nature of the room so appealed to Andy that he sat down and pulled out a long-neglected pipe, refusing one of Sullivan's Havanas. He began to think a little sentimentally of Jean, and how she would miss him. He hoped he was not going to get into the habit of doing this sort of thing.

"And a lot of books, too, you've got! I say, I didn't know you were a bookish sort." Andy had a highly-cultivated barbarian contempt for men who knew no better than to be openly literary.

"I'm not," returned Sullivan. "Some of those are my father's—a few of 'em mine. A man can't help owning a few books by the time he's thirty-five. But don't worry. I've no autographs, no Americana, Thackerayana, Napoleonica, no first editions, nothing to take your peaceful mind off your pipe."

Andy laughed and slouched comfortably down in his chair. "You must say something about a fellow's possessions the first time you visit him. I'll tell you what I was thinking all the time, Sullivan—the room don't look like *you*, somehow."

Sullivan pulled his mustache and got a little bricky-red over his cheekbones. "It looks a whole lot like me," he declared. "But I know what you mean, Crawford. Every now and then a man goes out of his way to make a bally ass of himself. He knows he's

doing it, but neither knowledge, nor forebodings, nor the warnings of fearful friends can stop him. Now, when you get me on my native heath I'm no ornament to the landscape, maybe, but I'm not a damned fool, either. I understand my business and I like it; I do a bit of reading and a bit of writing. I'm fond of sport. I can shoot pretty straight; I've got a yacht and am competent to be my own skipper. I've got plenty of friends. But, by Jove, put me on a horse and I look like a natural! Well, there came a time when what the gods gave me didn't satisfy, and that was the time I hiked down to Glendale to make a thundering exhibition of myself. I suppose you dyed-in-the-wool horsemen thought I didn't know it; but I did. My days and nights were wretched with thinking what an ass I was; and yet I hadn't the nerve to quit. Well, thank the Lord, that's over with!"

"Over?" queried Crawford feebly. "Nonsense! Keep on and we'll make a rider of you yet."

"No, you won't," returned Sullivan grimly. "I know when I've had enough. The law is off tomorrow down in Maine, and I'm off to shoot something and forget what I've been through."

"What put it into your head to take to hunting?"

Sullivan puffed meditatively at his cigar. "I don't mind telling you, now it's all past history. I made my first attempt last season because I didn't know any better; but this year I started in with my eyes open, because the young lady I was engaged to suggested it—perhaps I should say commanded."

"Ah!" murmured Crawford appreciatively. "And she has given you permission to call it off?"

"She's given me permission to take myself off, which amounts to the same thing. I was to hunt to be near her aunt's at Glendale. That is, I suppose I was. I don't pretend to understand women."

Andy was delicately silent.

"The engagement isn't exactly off. I'm bound, while she's free; the usual

arrangement. Well, it's all in a lifetime. I can forgive myself everything but killing Mrs. Ware's Sir Donald."

"Any man might kill a horse. Maybe you were an ass to experiment on a lady's nag. But, bless you! *She* won't lay it up against you. An awfully good sort is Mrs. Bill."

"A fine, generous woman!"

"Not so young as she was, of course, and not so much of a good-looker."

"Nonsense, Crawford! Anyone but a newly-married man would call her a deuced handsome woman."

Crawford bent a shrewd eye on the other man and smiled a little under his mustache.

"Some people call her a bit too horsy to be good form. Jean and I are fond enough of the gee-gees, but we don't eat, drink and dream horses. Now the trouble with Mrs. Bill is she's nothing else to do. A less energetic woman with too much money and no husband or children to take up her mind would develop ennui or nervous prostration or some rot like that; Mrs. Bill's healthy and lively, so she takes it out in horsiness. Because, mind you, she hasn't had what you'd call a happy life. Her only brother, a great pal of hers, went to the bad and shot himself. Her mother was an invalid; always lived with the Wares till she died two years ago. You didn't know Bill Ware, of course. Bill wasn't an unmixed blessing. He was ten years older than his wife, awfully fond of her, but at the same time wrapped up in business, full of pet diseases, prosy and always talking of himself. You know the sort; if you'd ever seen him you wouldn't wonder at her being so ready to take to the open. Nobody knows exactly why she married him, but her friends think her people fixed it up; the kind that were perennially hard up, you know. She'd always had a lot of men about before she married, but she gave 'em all up for Bill right enough. Well, the Wares had a baby, and it died—oh, she's had all kinds of rotten luck."

"She's got pluck, all right!" Sullivan's face was grave and intent as he listened.

"Rather! But I don't want to bore you about Mrs. Bill. We all think rather a lot of her at Glendale. I couldn't begin to tell you the good turns she's done us all. The women all say she ought to marry again. My wife's got a funny theory. She says a woman has an impressionable fit periodically, every three or four years or so, and the first man who asks her when the sentimental era sets in is bound to get her. I mention it because she thinks one's about due for Mrs. Bill."

There was an unspoken question on Sullivan's face, and Andy unconsciously answered it.

"Of course there have been plenty of men she might have had. Colonel Hollis has wanted to marry her these five years. My wife says Mrs. Bill is weakening; in fact, she's got a notion it's privately settled already. Well, if it's all the same to you, old man, I think I'll turn in."

Sullivan took his guest to his one spare room, installed him, and came back again to the fire. He was in no mood for sleeping. The trivialities and accidents of life receded, as they are apt to do in the wee, small hours, and the big, bulky problems pushed in and took their place. The little history of Mrs. Bill's life, so unexpectedly dismal in spite of the lady's cheerful outside, turned his thoughts inward upon his own part. He thought of his meager boyhood in a country parsonage, of his struggle through college, of his resolve that, whatever else he missed, he would surmount the disadvantages and miseries of poverty. Well, so much had been accomplished; the weary, nerve-racking toil of years had at least put him far on the way to becoming a rich man. But tonight he thought only of what he had missed; he dreamed, as a successful man is bound to do, of eating his cake and having it too. He had lost so much of youthful, thoughtless pleasure, sentimental dalliance, the sweet sympathy of women. It was just this feeling of having lived through the best period of life without its best gifts, the longing to renew a half-tasted youth, that had sent him in pursuit of Lucy

Parmer. He saw it now. He had wanted to be like her, to be beginning as she was the emotional experiences of life. It had all been a ghastly mistake. He could never be twenty-five again. He should have found a Lucy Parmer ten years ago, and be now the weary, gray-haired father of half-a-dozen children. What is done in life is done; he must accept the good he had won, the mastery he had attained, the character he had wrought out, and let the rest go. Lucy must be released; it was lucky she had seen the impossibility of their ever hitting it off better than he had. He would turn to his own contemporaries; he would seek the society of women who, like himself, had known and suffered the storm and stress of life.

What a mess it might have been and how glad he was to be out of it! What a mess life was, anyway! What a mess Mrs. Ware would be making if in her fresh and wholesome second youth she married a man twenty years her senior! It would be an outrage; her friends should stop it. . . .

The hands of the clock had made a complete circle before Mark Sullivan was through with his disinterested thoughts of Mrs. Ware's future.

XIII

ALTHOUGH Andy Crawford, following Sullivan's advice, was soon on his financial feet again, his wife profited nothing by it beyond an undisturbed peace of mind; for Mrs. Bill had already got an option on Sultan.

"I'd take him on the nail," spoke Mrs. Bill to Niles, from Sultan's back after a bit of larking along the road and over a fence or two, "but I've a kind of notion he's some vice I haven't discovered. Are you sure he isn't a rearer?"

"No, Mrs. Ware, I ain't sure," declared Niles, fondling the horse's nose, while he looked his patroness straight and hard in the eye with that look of aggressive honesty that only a horse-dealer can possibly master in one short lifetime. "I ain't sure of it. A horse

is just like a man; it's a lot easier to prove him guilty than innocent. All I can say is he's been rode every day by me or my boy Jim and he ain't tried it yet on us, and if he's got a nice little parlor-trick like that it's pretty smart of him to keep it dark."

Mrs. Bill looked thoughtful.

"He was sent to us," observed Niles in an absent, offhand manner, "by a lady—about your build, ma'am, but not near so good a rider. She'd had him a year."

"I see," said Mrs. Bill, smiling; "a lady who was going abroad."

Niles laughed and winked. "We sure would go out of business if it wasn't for the ladies that will keep sellin' their stables to go abroad. But I'll tell you, ma'am, what I'll do with you. Take him and keep him a week, two weeks; I know *you* and I know the hoss, and at the end o' that time you wouldn't part with him for ten times the money."

Mrs. Bill accepted the proposition, and rode Sultan toward home.

At the entrance of her own grounds she met Lucy and Winchester riding out. They were coming at an easy canter, Winchester bending over toward the girl in as earnest and lover-like an attitude as can be managed out of a walk.

It was a sight that Mrs. Bill should have become tolerably well accustomed to; for Winchester came around nearly every day now as Lucy's accredited riding-teacher. Although Lucy succeeded in throwing a veil of utter commonplaceness over all her dealings with Winchester, Mrs. Bill was pretty well convinced, not only from her own observation but from the reports of her ally, Mrs. Clipston, that the affair was proceeding in a manner that ought to have been highly gratifying to her.

"It's my belief," Mrs. Clipston had pronounced at their last consultation, "that Win's really in love with her; or if not technically in love, so entangled in her wiles that it amounts to the same thing."

Mrs. Bill ought to have been gratified, but she was not. So long as she had

honestly believed Sullivan a monster she was willing to accept Winchester as a possible fairy prince. But while the monster was slowly breaking down the barriers of her prejudice, she began to remember that before she had a use for him she had had no very good opinion of Win. For one thing he was an idler, and she had an ineradicable American contempt for men who did not work. She had an uneasy feeling, too, that his code in regard to women was not quite to be trusted. It was not merely that she happened to have heard of one or two episodes which a more unworldly woman might have considered scandalous; that was neither here nor there, so long as the ladies were of a sort to know what they were about. It was Win's attitude toward girls of his own class that Mrs. Ware suspected. Misty memories of an engagement broken on his account began to rise up in her mind. She must see Mrs. Clipston and refresh her memory as to the details. She had been a fool to throw Lucy in his way without knowing as much of the kind of man he was as of the kind he seemed. Foolish Mrs. Ware, to persist in believing that anything she did or did not do could influence the appointed course of that brilliant young comet, Lucy Parmer!

"Tell Miss Parmer when she comes in," said Mrs. Ware to Hughes as she entered her own door, "that I wish to see her in my office."

XIV

THE apartment Mrs. Bill called her office was not at all a ladylike sort of room, and yet it was a very comfortable one. Mrs. Bill had chosen her house for coziness and comfort rather than for splendor; yet she often found it, after all, a dreary, silent sort of place, whose very smoothness and perfection got on her nerves, and was glad to shut herself into an apartment where the sun danced through the windows, a fire crackled audibly, and the decorations were dictated not by conventions but by her own peculiar tastes.

The beloved retreat was in a tower whose windows commanded on one side the driveway, on the other the stables, so that Mrs. Bill could view the approach of guests and the sallying forth of her darlings for a bit of exercise without rising from her big kidney-shaped desk where she was often busy of a morning with letters and accounts. Opposite the desk was the fireplace; and over the fireplace hung the spoils of the chase, in the form of a very respectable row of fox-brushes, a ribbon or two that her favorites had brought home from the New York show, and very high up a deer's head that commemorated the only sporting event in the life of the late Mr. Bill Ware. Above the oak wainscoting a level row of pictures ran round the room; there were sporting prints, of course, one or two dogs' heads in oils and a couple of Derby winners, incredibly long and lean, on stilts of legs, and with little reptilian heads. On the other side of the room from the fireplace was a book-case, wherein along with recent novels were "Handley Cross," "Market Harburch" and "Kate Coventry," together with treatises by such notable authorities as the Duke of Beaufort and Mrs. O'Donoghue, and technical works much consulted in the days of Mrs. Bill's apprenticeship, on stable and veterinary lore. On top of the book-case there were a few photographs: Colonel Hollis in his master's clothes, Jean Crawford on her mare Snowdrop, Mrs. Bill herself in the khaki she had affected in Georgia the Winter before.

There were no pictures of people dead and gone, no reminders of an unhappy past, for Mrs. Bill was the sort of woman to keep mementoes of grief securely tucked away, just as she banished the grief itself to an obscure corner of her heart. And yet for all that something about the room affected Mrs. Bill today with melancholy; the afternoon sun entered the windows at an unaccustomed slant, and she felt lonely, idle and empty-minded. In this mood she had stealthily taken out the picture of her baby from an under drawer of her desk, and cried over it a little. He

would have been eight years old, she thought— Then she resolutely put the picture back, and wiped her eyes; but when Lucy knocked at the door late in the afternoon they were still suspiciously red.

Lucy took it all in as she entered, still in her habit, flushed and glowing from the exercise, and held out her hands to the fire.

"Well, Aunt Bill," she said pertly, "what do you think of me? Am I turned out in proper form?"

Mrs. Bill gave a jab at her right eye behind Lucy's back, and dashed into the sort of conversation that was the only medium for her downhearted mood.

"Your skirt and coat are cut well enough, and your boots will do, though I don't advocate patent leathers myself. Neither do I think much of white gloves, while that three-cornered thing on your head is an unpardonable monstrosity—makes you look like an illustration on the cover of a weekly magazine. Give it to the poor and get yourself a decent bowler before you go out again."

Lucy laughed, made a face at the fire and threw her hat into a neighboring chair, feeling by instinct that she would make a more charming picture with wet and clinging tendrils of yellow hair falling on her forehead.

"How about my riding?"

"Oh, that's sloppy, of course, as yet; half the time you're on your horse's neck, the rest leaning on your stirrup. But then, I've never seen you except at the canter."

"I don't like to trot."

"Of course you don't. You'll never learn to ride until you know that the beginning and end of riding for a lady is the mastery of the trot. But for heaven's sake don't get me started on that. It's my hobby, and I've been known to talk all day on it."

"Then you didn't get me up here to deliver a lecture on gaits?"

Lucy threw herself into a chair and tapped her pretty little boot with a crop, as she had seen riding heroines do on the stage.

Mrs. Bill lapsed into seriousness again. "You might call it that—only it's *your* gait; I'm bothered about, Lucy. I've never asked you for your confidence before, my dear, but I should like to know which way you're heading. You may not understand that to me your actions take place in an impenetrable fog. You came down here engaged to Mr. Mark Sullivan, with Harry Parmer as an alternate diversion. Mr. Sullivan is temporarily off the scene; but whether your engagement to him is broken or not I haven't the slightest idea. Now Win Winchester seems to occupy the centre of the stage; for all I know he may have an understudy too. Tell me, Lucy, do you honestly intend to marry any of these men, or are you only drifting?"

"You're so serious, Aunt Bill, on the subject of men and matrimony. What difference does it make?"

"It makes this difference, that any girl who spends her time with Win Winchester with any other purpose than matrimony seems to me to be riding for a fall."

"Of course you understand Mr. Winchester."

"Not at all. Do you? What are your motives? You bewilder me."

Lucy pulled her chair about so that she faced Mrs. Ware, who sat at her desk, her clasped hands stretched forth earnestly upon it.

"Aunt Bill, I'll tell you something. When it comes to a question of men and motives, you're nothing but a baby—and an old-fashioned nineteenth-century infant at that. Maybe you don't think men worth understanding. I do. How do you see them? Nicely dressed, taking tea in your drawing-room or waltzing with you at a hunt ball, or riding with you at a hunt, when the feeling that I suppose you call comradeship simply consists in the man's absorbing interest in the fox and the run and utter oblivion of you. Now and then one of these animated shadows asks you to marry him, maybe, and you refuse him without understanding or caring to understand why he does it. All this time, though you

don't know it, there's some woman somewhere, to whom this man is an open book; to whom he confesses his secrets, acknowledges his tastes, before whom he unmask, in obedience to whom he acts. Sometimes it's a wife and more often it isn't. Now, Aunt Bill, I intend to be just that woman to as many men as I can. It's the only way to understand life."

Mrs. Bill gasped, but took the gate without flinching. "And have you ever considered where this course will probably land you?"

"I've told you where I intend it to land me—in the haven of complete comprehension of the masculine mind. Incidental difficulties don't trouble me."

Her little body was tense, her little face earnest. Mrs. Bill could not doubt that she was serious at last. She drummed with her fingers on the desk.

"If that's your philosophy, Lucy, I don't like it. I'm all for straight, clean going. Of course you realize that I can forbid your doing thus and so if I choose."

"You can ship me back to that nasty school; I realize that. But you can't forbid me to be myself, because I can act only as I am. If you told me to be good—good in your sense of what's expected from a young girl—I couldn't obey you if I would."

Mrs. Bill smiled in spite of herself.

"You see, aunt, you don't realize what it is to be brought up as I was brought up. Our people were always rich, we were always poor. My young cousins had everything they wanted; I had to be content with their cast-off things, invitations to their second-best parties, a term or two at second-rate schools; and I must smile and do tricks even for that. I was always shoved off in a corner, always kept out of everything. I wasn't very old before I made up my mind that there was one luxury that I could always have to a moderate extent whether I was rich or poor, and that is *my own way*. And as far as an obscure person can have it, I've always had it; and it's only fair to tell you I mean to go on having it!" Lucy

stopped, a little alarmed at her own eloquence, and added: "Not meaning any disrespect to you, Aunt Bill."

Mrs. Bill was not blind to the fact that even Lucy's astounding sincerity had a purpose in it; for why should she choose this moment for outlining her general philosophy if not to throw dust in her aunt's eyes with regard to her specific intentions as to Win Winchester?

"If you must have it, I can only continue to hope it will be at the expense of some meek, devoted husband, rather than of the outraged proprieties. Will you answer me one question?—honestly, please, or not at all. Is your engagement to Mr. Sullivan broken?"

"No."

"Wouldn't it be wise to be off with the old love before you are on with the new?"

"Better to be on with the new love before I am off with the old, I should think."

"And you positively won't tell me whether or not you are on with the new?"

"Perhaps I don't know myself."

Lucy walked to the window and presently went off into a fit of laughter.

"Oh, Aunt Bill, Aunt Bill! Here's your chance to chaperon a thankless creature like me with perfect respectability! Colonel Hollis is coming up the drive to ask you to marry him."

Mrs. Bill began to think there was something, after all, in Lucy's claims to omniscience. Her wind-tanned cheek was guilty of a blush.

"Where do you get that ridiculous idea, child?"

"Because he's coming in state with a man to drive him. He's got on clothes just like anybody's, and a rose in his buttonhole. Even from here his expression is sad and serious. There's a kind of look when they've that in mind—you can't mistake it."

"Will I do?" asked Mrs. Bill, with an appraising look into the glass.

Lucy looked carefully at the woman who towered a whole head above her. "You're really a rather stunning woman, Aunt Bill. It's a pity you

don't think of it oftener—tell me afterward if I was right."

"My affairs are as much my secret as yours," returned Mrs. Bill as she swept with a suspicion of hauteur from the room.

XV

It was growing toward dusk, outside the drawing-room windows, and Mrs. Bill was glad of that, for her fleeting look into the glass had shown her that the redness of her eyes had not wholly abated. She felt, with her first look at Colonel Hollis, that Lucy was right, for there was something portentous and purposeful in the expression of his keen, ruddy face.

With the instinct for putting off the evil day she rang for tea, only to find that when the tray was established, and she officiating behind it, the atmosphere was heavier than ever with a kind of tender domesticity. She felt his eyes on her hands as she filled his cup, sweetened it with just the right number of lumps and diluted it with the proper amount of cream; for Colonel Hollis's tastes with respect to tea were just old-fashioned enough to bring him into line with the proper Anglomaniac craving for cream. When he took the justly-prepared cup from her hand (it was Mrs. Bill's one vanity to know that it was a very pretty one) with an air of significant reverence, Mrs. Bill knew it was all up. The hour was come. She might as well be deciding whether she would or she wouldn't.

"My dear young lady," began Colonel Hollis (it is rather nice being called a young lady when one is not so far from thirty-five), "it's at a time like this, sitting at your cozy fireside, drinking your excellent tea, that a man like me begins to understand how lonely most of his hours are in his own home. To be sure, I'm not alone; Frank and Arthur come and go; sometimes by accident we even eat dinner together; and once or twice a year Mary comes with the kids and turns the old place upside down. But most of the time I'm alone. It isn't nice being alone.

If I want to talk about hounds or the horses I've got to go down to the club. If I think of a good thing to say there's no one to say it to; and all the pleasant little incidents of life, like dreaming before the fire, and having tea and walking in the garden I have to cut out, because a man is bound by his nature and bringing up to think them silly if he has to tackle them alone. Well, there it is—you see what's missing, don't you? You know what I want?"

"I am sorry for you, my friend," she said gently. "I suppose I do see. I wonder that you've got on so long without a companion—without a wife."

"You admit I need a wife, do you?" She nodded.

Colonel Hollis put his teacup back upon the table, took a turn or two up and down the room and then faced her, his back to the fire.

"Well, there's where you're quite wrong! I ought to be ashamed of myself, gray-haired old sinner that I am, to work like this on the sympathy of a generous young woman! It isn't a wife I want: a something that will answer to the name of Mrs. Hollis, who will grace my board, ride my horses and solace my declining years. I've been deceiving you and trying to deceive myself. If that were all I could jog on comfortably enough and be glad to do it. I know you'll be generous with me, and so I'll be frank with you. I don't want a wife—I want you. It's a shameful thing for a man of my years to confess, perhaps; but a man never loved a woman more honestly than I do you, my dear girl—and there you are! Take it or leave it!"

Colonel Hollis paced nervously away to the other end of the apartment and back again, his eye bright, his face working a little with unaccustomed emotion.

Mrs. Bill sat glued to her chair, her heart pounding away uncomfortably, her brain in a whirl. Not the fact itself, but the nature of the avowal had taken her completely off her feet. That Colonel Hollis wished to marry had touched her; that he should cherish a genuine passion for her was astounding.

Before he spoke she had almost made up her mind to accept him, on the theory that two lonely people of tolerant natures and sympathetic tastes might, on the whole, be happier together than apart. She knew now, and was miserable in knowing it, that to be the unresponding wife of a doting husband was a rôle she could never undertake again. Hollis's frankness had been his undoing; he had put his offer in the only form which put it out of her power to accept it.

"Well, my dear?" he asked kindly, as his pacing brought him abreast of her chair again.

Mrs. Bill, without shame or concealment, was quietly weeping. "I can't, colonel, I can't possibly. I didn't know you felt like that about it. Oh, dear!"

He took it stanchly. "How could you? How could anyone expect it?"

"I wish I could—I almost could—"

"You are too honest to deny me if there were a grain of hope—say no more and let us be friends."

"Friends indeed—dear friends!" and Mrs. Bill, taking his hand in hers, lifted her head and, quite unsolicited, kissed him.

Mark Sullivan, duly announced, walked into the room, quite unconscious of its emotional temperature. Colonel Hollis was guilty of another "Damn the fellow," underneath his breath, but Mrs. Bill was perhaps a little relieved to have the tension broken. It gave her a motive for struggling back to the conditions of commonplace social intercourse. The electric lamp which she ordered lighted on a distant table did not reveal the secret of her reddened eyes; later, perhaps, she would pay for the effort with a headache, but for the moment she was honestly glad to see Mark Sullivan.

The glossy high hat under his arm, the frock coat, the gray gloves and trousers were a kind of attire he had never been given to while he was living in the country. They seemed now to mark his detachment from the sporting life of Glendale, and draped his mighty limbs with a very becoming dignity. He was just back from Maine, he told

them, and on his face was the fresh record of keen air and healthful days and nights.

"For fear you will find it out in spite of me," he said, "I must confess to you, Mrs. Ware, that one of my reasons for coming down so soon is a very impertinent one."

Colonel Hollis's expression declared that he thought it impertinent of Mr. Mark Sullivan to exist at all.

"There's a certain subject on which you people must think it impudent for me to enter at all; especially when I undertake to give advice. It's about a horse, Mrs. Ware, a horse named Sultan. Crawford happened to tell me he had been thinking of getting him for his wife until he heard you had him. Have you bought him yet?"

"No, but I think I shall."

"Ah! I suppose Niles told you he'd been ridden by a lady? I happened yesterday to meet the husband of that lady. It seems that she rode him all right, but as a consequence she's in the hospital with compound fracture of both arms."

"Didn't know how to ride, I dare say."

"On the contrary, she's hunted for years in England and Ireland. It's Mrs. Stanfield-Burke. It seems the animal was run into by a motor and becomes unmanageable whenever he sees one."

Mrs. Bill acknowledged it was a nasty vice, but trusted in her own powers either to avoid motors altogether or get Sultan safely past them.

"Have you no influence?" asked Sullivan, turning to Colonel Hollis.

"I fancy Mrs. Ware knows as much about that sort of thing as I do," responded Hollis a little stiffly; and soon after took his hat and rang for his trap, leaving Mrs. Ware and Sullivan to fight out the safety question together. Unfortunately they came to no conclusion. Mrs. Ware did think it impertinent of Sullivan to dictate to her on so personal a matter. Sullivan could not make it plain without saying more than he dared that he was moved by an honest solicitude for her safety.

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"And was that really all you came for—to persuade me to give up a prize just when I'd got it in my grasp?"

"Almost all," responded Sullivan after a pause.

He had not once asked for Lucy.

XVI

"Do you know something? This is the first time we ever danced together. Fancy my having been so rash as to say to you what I did last night in utter ignorance of how you might choose to execute a waltz! Our steps might not have suited, and then where should we have been? It would have been a tragedy—wouldn't it?"

Win Winchester looked down with indolent fondness on the little creature whom he was piloting about the room in the enclosure of his arms. He had never seen her so bewitching as she was tonight. She was really marvelously lovely. He did not at all regret having committed himself so soon; or if he did, it was with the faintly protesting regret of the luxurious bachelor at being compelled at last to give up certain comforts for very uncertain joys.

Lucy looked up at him with softly parted lips. "That question hasn't been answered yet," she reminded him as they floated along.

She hardly knew herself tonight. She could hardly separate the confused sensation of delight that came from the lights, the music, the steps that so perfectly guided her own, the pressure of his hand at her waist from the separate ecstasy that reigned in her spirit; she could hardly be sure that besides the girl who loved dancing there was another who would be blissfully happy in her secret heart when all the dancing and music were over.

All her coquetry, her wilfulness, her perversity, for the moment were gone. She felt gentle and at peace. She did not want to torment anybody; on the contrary she would have liked to do something for Win, something even that meant a little sacrifice of herself. She *was* sacrificing herself—she felt it—

in giving up her own familiar mocking spirit for this unfamiliarly gentle one. She wondered a little how long it would last; would Win be able always to command it, or would his empire over her one day crumble away, leaving her the mocking and insubordinate Lucy again? She did not idealize Win; she had few illusions about him. She felt him to be superficial, self-indulgent, a little unscrupulous, possibly a little cruel; but these qualities to her meant social skill and success, an easy eminence over the weak and blundering good people, superiority to herself. She loved Win because he made her taste the unusual emotion of being a little in awe of him. Meanwhile, in his perfectly fitting coat of red, in all his well-groomed, elegant outside, there was not a man in the room to match him. It was the fastidious youth in Lucy that valued all these things.

It was the night before Thanksgiving and they were dancing at the Glendale Hunt Ball, that established function that dates from time immemorial, or quite ten years back, and marks the end of the brief Fall hunting season. It is always, in its way, a very glad occasion. To a few ardent spirits like Colonel Hollis and Mrs. Bill a little dancing, no matter how perfectly enshrined, is but scant consolation for the end of that sport for which the earth revolves and toward which the seasons take their appointed way.

But since everything must end, there is a pleasure in reflecting that once the end has come, nothing that now may happen can mar a season's glorious record. The season had been a most successful one. Hounds had proved the wisdom of the master's selection, the soundness of his methods by their stanchness and liveliness in the field. They had "found" no fewer than forty times; and straight, hard, long runs had been the rule. Farmers had been complacent, and sport had seldom been marred by disputes about barbed wire and trampled Winter wheat. And though there had been a few falls here and there, and a twisted wrist or ankle or so, the luck and good riding of the

Glendale Hunt had prevented a single nasty accident. And now hunting days were over stanch hunters and fair Dianas might dance hard and long, without feeling that they were making inroads on energy that should be saved for a nobler sport. After the night's dissipation might come a long, long morning in bed, untroubled by a guilty conscience or haunting fears of frost.

Colonel Hollis, who was able to stand without inconvenience four days a week in the field, called himself, nevertheless, too old to dance. He stretched out his neat, silk-stockinged legs as he sat down by Mrs. Bill, and said: "Well, Mistress of Hounds, it hasn't been so bad—what?"

In the week that had followed the colonel's unexpected declaration, the condition of their intercourse had somehow reestablished them both on a safe and comfortable basis. Allies in the field cannot afford to be troubled by the complications of their private existence; and though Colonel Hollis in his hours of ease still seemed to apologize for his indiscretion by a new and touching deprecation, the first good run had cleared from both their minds the fumes of that fatal cup of tea. It seemed to be the colonel's attitude that if he had gained nothing, he had at least lost nothing; and Mrs. Bill was relieved, though a little humiliated, to find that, while he demanded nothing, he did not mean to stop being fond of her.

"It's been glorious, my friend!" she answered heartily.

"Going South again now that the campaign's over?"

"No; I shall stay here and live on its memories; and keep my stable from going stale."

Colonel Hollis nodded approvingly. "That Sultan of yours, now. You surely were never better carried in your life than you were last Wednesday; and yet I think he needs a bit of schooling."

Mrs. Bill frowned reminiscently. She was too much of a sport to give away the awkward tussles she had had before getting the beast up to the

splendid performances the colonel had noticed; but the truth was she was getting a little nervous of him. "I may have to get rid of him before another season. He's bad at water," she confessed.

And while the votaries dwelt in spirit with the hunt, Win and Lucy still waltzed. As they came up the edge of the room, Lucy was faintly conscious of a woman in black who, as she reversed with Bob Hilary down the centre, looked curiously into her face. Lucy danced on, her mood of ecstasy untroubled; but when the lady in black passed again, she looked up to find the woman staring her straight in the eyes, as if she sought to find in the girl's face the answer to some eager and haunting question. The third time Lucy, reawakened to her usual keen realization of what was going on about her, saw that the glance traveled from her face upward to Win's and that the lady's mouth twisted into a shape of silent amusement. Glancing quickly up at Win herself, she saw that he was smilingly returning the glance. Lucy's heart contracted involuntarily, though why she did not know.

The strange woman was tall, slight and very distinguished; she danced perfectly, with an insolent indifference to her partner, her piercing black eyes roving where they would. Her face was pale, her lips very red; her air was at once nervous and languorous.

"Who is that woman?" she asked sharply, in spite of herself, as the strange lady faded away in the maze and Win dropped his eyes to hers again.

"What woman?"

"The woman you were making eyes at just now—in black."

"She is a Mrs. Gordon Spencer," he answered her indifferently enough.

"Do you know her?"

"Yes, a little; that is, I used to."

Lucy tried to summon up some association that she had with the name of Mrs. Gordon Spencer; but nothing came. The effort spoiled her blissful mood, and she suddenly lost all delight in dancing.

"I think I'll stop now," she murmured.

"What's the matter?" asked Win in his tenderest note.

"Nothing. I'm a little tired. I promised the last half of this to Harry Parmer," she murmured incoherently.

When Harry Parmer, to whom she had *not* promised the last half of this waltz, had nevertheless been summoned, as he was always ready to be, to her side by an imperious glance, Lucy had determined to sit it out. Win moved away and was lost, while Harry, happy merely to be sitting close to her, fanned her solicitously. She closed her eyes indifferently, and then felt them flash open with a start as Win went by her, bending his head as tenderly above Mrs. Gordon Spencer as he had but a few minutes since bent over her. At the same moment two women behind her, whose voices she did not recognize, fell into idle conversation.

"There she is, my dear, in black over white, with a diamond pendant—and of all things, with *him*."

"I thought that was over and done with."

"Mary Spencer's affairs are never over and done with. They merely subside and revive as she blows hot or cold."

Lucy, in front of them, shivered and clenched her hands.

"Is Gordon with her—have you noticed?"

"I believe not. Someone told me she descended suddenly upon the Hilarys this morning. You know Bob's a cousin of her husband's—or she chooses to think he is." Lucy turned furtively to see if Harry had heard. Her pride quivered to think of it; but his face was unmoved—he was still swinging her fan back and forth, with a look of abject, changeless adoration.

There was a chill in Lucy's heart that frightened her. She knew the gossips were right. They spoke carelessly, indifferently, as people mention a well-known fact. It all tallied with Mrs. Spencer's curious look at her, with her familiar interchange of glances with Win. Lucy was torn with undefined

rage. She knew it was absurd of her; she had always known that Win must have had dozens of such affairs. It was the words of the woman behind her, the hint that Mrs. Spencer had always the power of calling moribund passion into life, the fear that she was a factor in the present, that shook poor Lucy. For the first time in her life she felt helpless. In a contest with a married woman of the world who had nothing but her own caprice to gratify, and nothing at all to lose, Lucy felt she was sure to be worsted. It was just that. She who never before had feared a rival, knew that she was afraid, and at that on mere suspicion; and the very extent of that fear revealed to her how strong was her desire for the subjugation of Win.

"I suppose this is the way people feel when they are jealous," she thought, realizing for the first time the strength of the emotion she had so often played with.

When Win came back for her again, as in the course of time and according to previous arrangements he was bound to do, she greeted him with a feverish eagerness. She felt hot and cold, feared that her smile was false, knew that her laugh rang hollow.

"I know who that woman is you were dancing with," she began, in a voice she tried to make merely arch and daring.

"It is no mystery. I told you who she was."

"Oh, yes, you told me her name. But it seems there are other things to be said about her—other things to be said about you."

"What things?"

"That she's an old—" Lucy paused. "I suppose flame would be the properest word to use in the connection."

A slow smile dawned on Win's thin face. He looked mockingly down at her. In that smile she read a perfect comprehension of her own childish jealousy, a lazy determination to be in no way moved from his course by it.

"Silly child," he murmured.

"I'm not a child," she protested hotly. "Don't imagine for a minute

that I am. I quite understand what your relation with Mrs. Spencer probably was. Everybody else realizes it."

"My dear child, you are absurd. One doesn't talk of such things." Win's face grew hard and set; a little contemptuous.

"I do. I talk as I please. You and I have often talked of them when they didn't concern you. It isn't decent of her to be here. It isn't decent of you to dance with her."

"Why not?"

"Because of what people will say."

"People will probably say, considering that Mrs. Spencer and I are old friends, that poor Win Winchester is letting himself in for a very jealous wife."

"I am not your wife yet."

Win smiled again, a lazy, contemptuous smile, hardly looking at her, while Lucy felt like a prisoned butterfly, whose fluttering wings, beating against their barriers, only ruin and despoil themselves. This was what it meant to give up the empire over men, to accept it from one of them. If this was being in love she hated it! Win thought she was subdued, perhaps. He had liked her cruel little conquests and triumphs because they seasoned his victory over her. But she would find a way out. So she danced on, the fever of her spirit brightening her eyes and deepening the rose in her cheeks.

XVII

GERTRUDE WARE and Jane Clipston, stranded for a moment in an obscure corner, fell gladly enough from masculine stimulus to the solid comforts of purely feminine companionship.

"My dear Gertrude," said Mrs. Clipston, "if I had gone on simpering and smiling for another moment I should have died of thirst. What I need is a highball of gossip."

"My dear Jane, what have you been doing all the evening? I know for one thing you haven't danced once."

"Oh, I've *talked*, to be sure; I admit I'm always talking. But to talk

guardedly and with reserve, while giving one's conversation an air of guileless spontaneity is a more wearing kind of amusement than bridge or skat."

"With me you need not even be intelligent."

"Exactly. With you I may wander carelessly behind the scenes. And now tell me—is all going well with Lucy and Win Winchester?"

"If going well means going strong along the road to matrimony, it is. He asked her to marry him the day before yesterday. I have reason to be sure of it, for it's the first time she ever voluntarily confided anything to me."

"And of course she accepted him?"

"No. Said she must have time to consider it."

"Little minx! Does she think Winchesters grow on every bush?"

Mrs. Bill shrugged her shoulders and dropped her voice. "Have you noticed that Mrs. Gordon Spencer is here?"

"Of course. I don't like it—don't like it at all. The woman's a cat."

"There's no doubt, of course—"

"None whatever, I should say."

"And you think—?"

"I think Lucy would better snatch him out of the fire before old embers begin to glow."

Mrs. Bill sighed. "I can trust Lucy to do whatever will be for her own advantage. If she were only a different kind of girl I could wish a different kind of husband for her. I don't like these men with 'affairs.'"

"No, you always did like 'em to ride straight—and speaking of riding straight, look over there, do!"

Mrs. Bill's eyes obediently followed the direction of her friend's. In the opposite doorway, almost filling it, was the massive figure of Mark Sullivan. He looked very tall, very straight and—did her eyes deceive her?—very distinguished. His ordinary evening clothes repudiated any connection with the hunt, and, strangely enough, the contrast with the prevailing red coats was all to his advantage. The rugged modeling of his face, thrown

into higher relief against his black clothes, would have recommended him to anyone unprejudiced by a knowledge of his exploits in the field. Mrs. Bill said to herself that she liked his looks, and compared him in her mind with the elegant, dapper Winchester.

"He's looking for someone," observed Mrs. Clipston in amusement, as Sullivan's calm, searching eye went traveling from face to face about the room. "He's found her. My dear Gertrude, he's making for *you*."

Mrs. Bill could not imagine why she did it, but as Mrs. Clipston announced her discovery of Sullivan's intention, she blushed—blushed like a girl.

Jane Clipston was still quietly laughing behind her fan when Sullivan came alongside.

"I was thinking," he announced with humorous good-nature, "of asking someone to risk life and limb with me in a waltz. Mrs. Clipston, are you brave enough?"

"Oh, I dare anything; but unfortunately I'm not in training. I'm getting on to the age when one may own up to rheumatism."

"Mrs. Ware!" He attacked his real purpose on a deeper note.

Mrs. Ware confessed her courage and adequate training. She resigned herself to his arms and was borne about the room with great vigor and speed. Like many large and seemingly awkward men, he danced well; and Mrs. Bill, who had a passion for perfection in any form of physical exercise, was content with him. She liked his way of guiding her, firm, respectful, without a suspicion of the secret pressure of hand to hand; she liked feeling herself small, feminine, dependent, in relation to his great frame and powerful stride. She was very silent, thinking of it and wondering at herself.

"Our steps suit," he murmured.

And somehow there was a pleasure and a meaning in these simple words.

They were very conspicuous dancing together, the big blond man, the tall dark woman. Friends who were in the secret of her former abhorrence made little jokes about it; till humorous in-

nuendoes of a good-natured sort were flying about the room, and a fate was already planned for them that had perhaps not yet definitely occurred to his mind, and certainly had never invaded the peace of hers.

But in the last lap disaster overtook them. Sullivan's foot somehow entangled itself in her filmy draperies, and, withdrawn, left a long rent behind it. They stood aside from the press to investigate damages.

He did not offer humble and profuse apologies. She did not expect them.

"I shall have to go to the dressing-room to mend it," she murmured.

"I will wait for you here. Be sure you come back," he said.

Her eyes met his with a look of understanding. Both of them were in a kind of dream. Mrs. Bill thought nothing of her torn skirt; only of her anxiety to be dancing again. He was thinking only of her.

As the maid in waiting whipped together the torn edges, under the electric light, Mrs. Bill's glance traveled unconsciously about the darker area of the room. There was something white in the farthest corner; it was the figure of a girl, a girl with clenched hands and heaving shoulders. It was—

Mrs. Bill escaped from the repairer's hands and sped swiftly to the obscure corner.

"Lucy, what's the matter, my dear?"

Lucy made a dab at an escaping tear, and would not speak.

"Have you quarreled with Mr. Winchester?"

"Quarreled with him!" burst forth Lucy in a breath of intense passion. "My God! Does he think he can flaunt that woman in my face, and I'm to bear it tamely?—begin, mind you, with that and end by submitting to anything and everything, by becoming the meek, uncomplaining kind of wife all the other wives are? I won't bear it!—I won't—I won't obey him! He must do as I say! He shall! I'm always going to have my own way!"

Lucy's little philosophy, which had rather made Mrs. Bill shudder when uttered in cold blood, fell pitifully and

ineffectively to pieces in passion and tears. But Lucy as a victim was more human and appealing than Lucy the conqueror. Mrs. Bill's heart went out to the wilful creature, torn with jealousy and pride and all the pathetic, immature little passions of girlhood.

"She is only a child, after all," thought Mrs. Bill. For almost the first time she felt all the tenderness for the girl she had once hoped to feel. She took her in her arms and tried to soothe her.

But Lucy was not far enough reduced for such comfort even yet. She fluttered out of Mrs. Bill's arms again, and tried to shake herself together.

"You'd better let me alone, Aunt Bill. I feel very nasty, and heaven knows whom I'll take it out of. Go back and dance."

This reminded Mrs. Bill of the patient Sullivan, who still, she did not doubt, was waiting for her in the identical spot where she had left him. But she shook her head.

"No, Lucy, I think it would be better for me to take you quietly home. You can't skulk about here any longer. Someone will come in and see you. I will ask Mr. Sullivan to order the motor."

"Mr. Sullivan!" Lucy's cheek flamed, not with emotion but with a new idea.

"I've just been dancing with Mr. Sullivan. He's waiting for me outside."

Lucy had already flown for the powder-puff. She passed a skilful hand over her disordered hair. The idea was already full-formed in her mind. She wanted to punish Winchester, and here was the instrument ready to her hand.

"Wait here a moment," she commanded her aunt imperiously. "I am going to dance with Mr. Sullivan."

And dance with Mr. Sullivan she would for the rest of the evening, conspicuously, continuously, till every tongue in the ball-room was wagging, till Sullivan was won back, till the insubordinate Win Winchester was beside himself with wrath and jealousy.

Mrs. Bill shrugged her shoulders and tried to laugh at herself. What match was she for Lucy? She had been capering about like a young girl all the evening, and it was very fitting she should be abruptly shown her place and should go back into the ranks of the chaperons.

Very fitting indeed. Yet the truth was Mrs. Bill did not like it at all. She knew she had no business to be angry, yet she was angry. She told herself it was because Lucy's whims annoyed her; because they were conspicuous and in bad taste; because Mark Sullivan was too much of a man to be subjected to them.

Deep down in Mrs. Bill's heart there was another thought; a timid thought, half-stifled and very much ashamed of itself.

She hoped Mark Sullivan would regret the change of partners!

XVIII

Mrs. BILL woke the next morning with a bad headache and a considerable disgust for herself. Thinking over the events of the night before, she could not acquit herself of something which in her position ought to be considered a weakness; a kind of vague tenderness for Mark Sullivan's obvious interest in her, a willingness to let her fancy be captured, just as if it were maiden and untouched. It is a kind of mood into which any woman may very easily fall, and out of which she may very easily recover herself if she have a sense of humor. And thus the lapses and yieldings and attractions that in a sterner and more strenuous day led to embroilments and tragedies, oftenest terminate amid the conflicting subtleties of modern life in a reminiscent sigh and a laugh.

When Mrs. Bill had settled to her own satisfaction that she was a very silly woman, she naturally resolved to ride it off. And being a woman in revolt against the dominating idea of a certain man, there was a certain pleasure in adding a defiance of his wishes to the

tonic virtues of an active morning in the open air.

"Saddle Sultan for ten o'clock," she telephoned to the stable.

And after so much was done she felt a kind of reluctance at setting out. A ride alone, without an object, though it may develop into something very delightful, does not, in anticipation, look alluring. Mrs. Bill dawdled over her breakfast-tray, dawdled over tying her tie and buttoning her coat.

Should she ask Lucy to ride with her? She winced at the thought.

Colonel Hollis? she meditated. And then shook her head and sighed.

It was rather horrid, after all, to be a lonely, independent woman with no one to care whether she came or went. Well! It was her own fault, wasn't it? There were people who would care if she would let them.

And here Mrs. Bill slashed her skirt with her crop and said "Bah!" just as if she were talking to someone else, and ran downstairs in a vast hurry, trying to make herself impatient by acting as if she were.

In front of the house Barney was leading Sultan up and down. The horse's flanks glistened with the discreet glow of a chestnut hide, he lifted his feet nervously and shook his head impatiently away from the bridle.

"A little fresh the morning, I should say, ma'am," observed Barney, touching his cap.

"All the better, Barney," returned his mistress in her heartiest horsewoman tones.

"I don't know can I put you up myself without another man to hold his head," suggested the groom dubiously. And Sultan's description of half-circles with Barney as a centre, justified Barney's fear that there might be a little difficulty in her mounting.

Mrs. Bill answered by letting down her skirt, catching the reins from Barney with her right hand, pushing him down into the proper position, and—jumping short as Sultan danced away from her.

Barney pursed his lips and drew in his breath with a long, melancholy

sound as she dexterously got herself away from the nervous beast.

"Will I try it for you again, ma'am?" he inquired sadly and forebodingly.

"Of course you'll try it again! What a lot of croakers you grooms are, to be sure!"

Barney fell to shaking his head, whether in denial of the charge or in persistent melancholy Mrs. Bill did not pause to decide. This time she went up like a bird, and adjusted herself as best she might while Sultan swerved to the right and was off like mad down the driveway.

Barney stood looking after her, still shaking his head, his eyes expressing instant expectation of seeing her thrown and a determination of being on hand to pick up the pieces; but when she was out of sight and nothing had happened, he walked slowly and ponderously back to the stable, his back bent, his long ape-like arms dangling ahead of him.

"There do be no good at all coming of her riding that one," he confided to Tom and Andrew. "No good at all; mark my words, no good at all."

Mrs. Bill did not carry her defiance of good advice so far as to take Sultan across country that morning. The horse was on edge, thrilling with causeless exhilaration, quivering with unknown terrors. Mrs. Bill found him a nasty handful.

But there is always an excitement in circumventing a badly behaved horse. By the time she had trotted for miles and miles, cantered smartly up a dozen hills, sat out half-a-dozen shies and incipient bolts, Mrs. Bill herself had at least forgotten that she had ever supposed herself to be suffering from headache. It was well after noon when she found herself on a back road headed for home, trotting slowly along, the sun very hot on her back, her arms loose and a little weary. Any such small matters as affections and repulsions and their management had faded pleasantly into a background from which there was, happily, no immediate need of rescuing them; and foremost in her mind was the anticipation

of such comforts as a bath, a change of clothes and luncheon. She was dreaming thus when the honk of an automobile a few hundred yards down the road in front awakened her to life.

So far she had never given Sultan's reputed antipathy to motors a thorough trying-out, having used him mostly cross-country and on roads that were good for his feet and unattractive to motors. On the few occasions when they had met the monsters Sultan had shied, of course; but she was so far inclined to think the blot on his character undeserved. But as the car drew nearer and nearer she felt strange disturbances quivering through the mighty frame of Sultan. He put back his head, his forelegs straight, and seemed to be in the throes of a gigantic struggle—as if he felt already the enemy pressing against his chest. Then as the spur went into his side and the crop took him sharply on the off shoulder, he leaped into the air, measuring the length of the passing car in the single action, and was off down the road, bending to the ground like a cat, ears flat, quivering nostrils out. He had seized the bit in his teeth and held it obstinately.

Mrs. Bill's first thought was that it was a bore to be bolted with when she was so tired. Her second was that she would be luckily out of it with no bones broken.

For the maddened beast was galloping ahead with strength unimpaired. Mrs. Bill kept her hands down, not attempting to fool with his mouth; knowing that the only thing was to let him tire himself out, and devoutly hoping she could get a clear road for him to do it in.

But that was not to be. A bit of blackness skimming out of the dust in front, a loud honk simultaneously behind, warned Mrs. Bill that the upper and nether millstones were about to grind her between them.

"I'll ride for a fall," she thought, and pulling him out of his course by the neck she set him at the fence on the right. It was quite five feet high, and it was out of her power to put him at it

straight; but to her astonishment he rose to it like a bird—caught his nigh hind foot in the top rail, and then they were both down, Sultan fortunately with his still struggling legs away from her, she flat with her bridle-hand beneath her.

It was not quite immediately when Mrs. Bill sat up and looked about her. Sultan was on his feet, cowering against the fence, a long ripple passing now and then over his shiny coat betraying that his fear had not quite worn itself out. She had not seen him getting up. She felt a bit dazed.

"I must have fainted," she thought in mingled horror and disgust. "Now what the devil did I do that for?"

Sultan lifted his naughty head and whinnied.

"Come here, you brute," she called, and struggled to her feet intending to seize him by the bridle. As she did so an awful twinge ran down her left arm and settled at her wrist. Faintness came over her again, and she was obliged to sit down ingloriously among the corn-stubble and let it pass off. Looking about to see if she were pounded, she discovered a gate at the end of the farm wagon-road just ahead, with all the bars down but one. She did not think she could mount; so there was nothing for it but to get hold of Sultan's bridle with her sound hand and lead him home.

Just as she was coaxing him out of the field, however, a Brookfield doctor in a run-about came fortunately chugging along; Mrs. Bill was given a seat in the car, while the doctor's boy was commissioned to lead Sultan home.

Once there Mrs. Bill's arm was examined, pronounced only a bad sprain; the doctor anointed it, tied it up in a sling and ordered her to keep away from horses until further notice.

Then she went upstairs, feeling as helpless as a baby, to have her hair done and her clothes changed. She was sitting very weakly in her big chair before the mirror while Bennett undid her braids and rearranged them for the purposes of ordinary life, when the maid observed discreetly:

"There seems to be a letter for you, ma'am, on the dresser. Miss Lucy left it, I believe."

"Left me a letter! Why on earth should she be writing me letters?"

Bennett coughed apologetically. "I don't know, ma'am. She has gone up to town, and perhaps she isn't expecting to return immediately."

"Give me the letter," said Mrs. Bill, "and go down now for my luncheon."

XIX

How like Lucy! How pitifully like her! A plan of action was dimly forming itself in Mrs. Bill's head, and until it should crystallize she read the letter over again:

DEAR AUNT BILL:

I've gone up to town for the day, and before my return I rather fancy I shall have settled all my tiresome affairs so that you never need trouble your head again to decide whom I positively must or absolutely mustn't marry. It has been very good of you so kindly to shelter and direct my inexperience. [The minx!] Of course one has to marry sometime. I dare say you thought I would wind up as the obedient slave in the harem of Mr. Win Winchester. I dare say he thought so, too. He will probably have the impudence to be surprised when he finds I was only playing with *him*!

There is only one of my followers who has ever really cared about me—and before I change my mind I'm going to make him happy—or he thinks I am, poor man!

If you aren't too cross we may come down to call on you tomorrow. Do invite Winchester to meet us!

LUCY.

Like Lucy, indeed. Without a thought for any but herself; spiting and outraging even her own perverse little heart, wantonly plunging herself and somebody else into a lifetime of unhappiness to gratify a moment's rage against Winchester. Teasing even in such a moment the only woman who had ever taken an interest in her, by leaving dangling before her the problem of which of her suitors Miss Lucy was about to sacrifice.

"What it is to be young!" thought Mrs. Bill, sighing. And then, "No, no—what it is to be heartless!" And

then, "What it is for the poor child always to have lacked so much. It is somebody's fault that she grew up like this."

The problem of *which* was only too easily solved. So it was for this she delivered Sullivan over to Lucy the night before! She had proudly refused to think of what the nature of their intercourse might have been; now she knew. She was very angry with Sullivan. She had not supposed it like him to suggest, nor to yield to a plan so clandestine, so hasty, in such execrable taste; she had not thought him a man so ready to be a plaything for a capricious girl. And in the midst of all these thoughts—for she put Lucy's concerns first—came a feeling of thankfulness that the emotions she had felt in him, in herself, last night, had remained inarticulate emotions; that the unspoken question had never sought an answer. If she had any reason to blush for herself, it need be a very secret blush indeed.

Meanwhile she could not be sitting tamely here, merely awaiting issues.

"What time did Miss Lucy leave here?" she asked Bennett, as the maid entered with her luncheon-tray.

"About half-an-hour before you came in, ma'am; at about two o'clock, I should say."

In the motor she could get to town easily in three hours, not much behind Lucy, who must—Mrs. Bill knew the time-table—have taken a slow train. There were a thousand places in town where they might go, might be married; only one spot that Mrs. Bill could think of where she had a reasonable chance of encountering them—Sullivan's rooms. It would be disgusting to go there; Mrs. Bill shuddered, but resolutely conquered her repugnance. After all, it was her business to take any risk to save Lucy at the last moment from making a fool of herself. She clearly, if she could love anybody, loved Winchester; and even if the union of real inclinations should never come off, Lucy should not furnish material to the newspapers by her hasty marriage to Sullivan. Sullivan—

poor, weak fool!—what need she care what he thought of her?

Mrs. Bill ordered the car and commanded the astounded Bennett to dress her in something warm.

"You're not going out, ma'am?"

"I must go to town on business. Bring me my fur coat, and tie up my head in a veil."

"Veils and coats won't keep you from catching cold in that wrist."

Mrs. Bill smiled firmly and distantly upon her troubled and kind-hearted maid, who, when remonstrance was found in vain, insisted on tucking her mistress up in a dozen coats and rugs, with a soapstone at her feet.

"And you won't even let me go with you?"

Mrs. Bill shook her head.

The ride up to town through the gathering dusk was long and cold and dreary; her wrist ached frightfully from the vibration of the machine, and yet before she realized it the car was standing in the quiet side street before Sullivan's apartment house. Her thoughts had moved feverishly as she rode. How should she treat them? What attitude should she take toward him? Should she be cold, distant, peremptory, or human, pleading, deprecatory? She decided on the whole that she would couple them together as a pair of naughty children, making the best of the fact if it were already accomplished, forcing them by matter-of-fact persuasion to give their folly up, if it were yet possible.

Of her own personal feelings toward Sullivan, of that convention which from habit and experience dictates exactly the terms on which two people are to meet—the degree of familiarity with which they are to speak—she would forget it all, and make him feel that to her he was of no concern except as Lucy's lover. She gave him credit for the chivalry which had made him Lucy's tool, and simultaneously despised him for its complying weakness.

She imagined the humiliation he must feel when he met her, and rejoiced in it.

Mr. Sullivan, he believed, was at home, said the functionary at the door. Very good. Mrs. Ware would leave her motor standing outside, and be conducted to Mr. Sullivan's rooms by a boy in buttons.

She stood a moment at his door before knocking, not because her heart misgave her, but because the whole errand was so unspeakably distasteful.

XX

THE door was opened by a man with a napkin over his arm. He had been engaged in laying a table at a cozy and convenient distance from the large open fire.

Mr. Sullivan was in his bedroom; he would fetch him immediately. Mrs. Ware remained standing, looking, quite unconsciously to herself, very haughty, very stern, very forbidding. A disinterested observer might well have been sorry for Sullivan.

He looked, on coming into the room, quite unruffled and a little surprised. There was absolutely no sign of a lady's having been there or being expected.

"My dear Mrs. Ware," he began, on an upward inflection.

Mrs. Bill barely acknowledged the salutation and dismissed it. With an inclination of her head toward the man still busy about the table, she indicated her desire of speaking to him in strict privacy. Sullivan sent away the man and begged her to be seated.

"I need hardly explain," she began, "why I am here."

Sullivan smiled upon her without embarrassment. "You need not as far as I am concerned. I am satisfied with the fact!"

Mrs. Ware was pained at his levity. "Please don't make polite speeches. You must be aware that I have very little cause to be satisfied with you. I shall be grateful if you will deal with me frankly. I am disappointed in you, Mr. Sullivan; I did not think you were the sort of man to allow a silly girl to make a spectacle of herself, even

from a motive of mistaken chivalry—But never mind that. Will you tell me, please, what you have done with Lucy?"

"Done with Lucy? I haven't done anything with her!" Sullivan's face was confused, a little angry.

"Where is she?"

"This is too absurd. I'm sure I don't know, Mrs. Ware."

Mrs. Ware looked at him as if she thought him mad. "When did you see her last?"

"To the best of my recollection, about two o'clock last night."

"And was no appointment, no arrangement made between you for today?"

"My dear Mrs. Ware!" Sullivan had risen to his feet and towered above her. "Pray think what you are saying!"

"I am saying nothing that I have not a perfect right to say. Lucy left my house this morning—eloped—to be married to you!"

"My dear lady, either you are mad or I am."

The undercurrents that ran through their speeches, the secret attraction she had for him, the interest he had awakened in her, his desire to appear to advantage, hers to sustain a part, gave their commonplace words, in spite of themselves, a significance and a sting. Both of them had ended in a flame of resentment.

Mrs. Bill opened her wrist-bag, took from it Lucy's letter, gave it to him without a word and turned away, her lips a little unsteady.

He read it, and was at her side. "I see, Mrs. Ware, I see! You thought this meant me! You thought Miss Lucy was bolting up to town to marry me out of hand!"

"What else could I think?"

"You need not have thought that my idea of chivalry and loyalty to a young lady who long ago had cast me aside was to allow myself to be used as a convenience!"

"It was like what I knew of you—I believed you to be a generous, honorable man."

"I might be all that and not be a fool. You knew something else, or should have known it— But all this, Mrs. Ware, is beside the mark. If you will pardon me, I should say the lucky man was young Parmer."

Mrs. Bill sank into a chair. "What a fool I am! Of course you are right."

"And I understand," his eye twinkled a little, "that it is your object to prevent her from making a hasty marriage with anyone—not merely with an objectionable person like myself."

"Of course. What can I do? Where can I find them?"

Sullivan drummed on the table. Then he took up the telephone. "Hello! Give me 21005— Yes? Marriage License Bureau? Will you kindly see if you have issued a license any time this week to Harry Parmer and Lucy Parmer— No?— What time does your office close?— Four o'clock— Yes, I thought so— What?— Today?— Just after four?— Thank you very much— Good-bye."

"Do tell me! What is it all about?"

"Well, that's luck! Young Parmer came to the License Bureau today just too late to get a license, and left saying he would be back for it in the morning. They're not married yet. You can comfort yourself with that!"

Mrs. Bill tried to be comforted, but shuddered a little.

Sullivan considered. "As I make it out she and young Parmer had just run up from Glendale in his car. I suppose he stayed down there last night after the dance? They get to the registry and find it closed. They've got to stay somewhere till morning—"

"I can't believe," broke in Mrs. Bill incoherently, "that even Lucy would be so rash as that! She couldn't do it!"

"Suppose," suggested Sullivan warily, "that you just ring up your own house. They may have at least heard of something."

Mrs. Bill took up the telephone and got her own number. "Hello! Is this you, Mary?— Yes—Mrs. Ware— Has Miss Parmer returned yet?— She *has*!—Ask her to come to the telephone!"

A confirming glance passed from Mrs. Ware to the waiting Sullivan—"What?—Oh, very well. I shall be back before ten o'clock— Tell her so— Good-bye."

Mrs. Bill's glance rested stonily upon Sullivan. "She's gone to bed and refuses to come to the telephone. Doesn't dare to face my severity. I don't wonder. It's the first sensible thing she's done today."

"Which means, I should judge, that the project has been quite abandoned. She would never have returned to your roof if she expected to renew the struggle."

Mrs. Bill had a moment of appreciation for Sullivan's acumen. "Perhaps you are right. You've had all the right, it seems to me, and I all the wrong. You've been very kind. I should apologize to you for what I said and what I suspected—"

And then something happened. The accident of the morning, the long ride in the cold, her aching wrist, the excitement and Sullivan's hot fire were too much for the stanch health of Mrs. Bill. The room began to go black and the massive figure of Sullivan wavered and tottered before her eyes. He caught her just as she was about to fall, put her into an arm-chair and forced some whisky between her lips. He was quite a minute ministering to her before her lips opened again; and to the big, capable man there was something inexpressibly appealing in beholding this Amazon of a woman, whose health and strength had always seemed among her chiefest charms, crumple into a bit of white and weary femininity. It was, perhaps, the last assault needed for the utter conquest of his manhood. Before Mrs. Bill fainted, to Sullivan she was lovely and desirable; as she came to, opening her eyes wonderingly in his big chair before the fire, she was already dear.

But these ripples and eddies of sentiment do not, in life, get themselves expressed so swiftly and neatly as they happen. Sullivan only said: "Try to drink some more of the whisky."

Mrs. Bill pulled herself together, and as she did so her big cloak fell back from her arm and displayed the bandaged wrist.

"Oh, you are hurt!" he cried, and there was a something in his voice to which the woman clung as if it were a visible support. It was a something which told her all she needed to know of his inner mind; which promised all she would ever want to take for the future. She offered this something allegiance when she spoke; tacitly accepting a domination she had long been trying to resist.

"I sprained it," were her simple words, "riding that brute Sultan. I should have known better— You warned me not."

Sullivan could not be a man without loving to command and be obeyed. A delicious thrill went through him, but he held himself resolutely to the commonplace. Her weakness asked for care and protection and should have them.

"I will warn you of something else," he said. "You are sitting much too near the fire, your coat is very heavy, and it is impossible at this hour that you should not be hungry. Let me help you off with your things and ring that waiter-fellow back again. I was just about to have a homely and comfortable fireside meal; a bit of broiled fish, a steak and baked potato and some coffee and Camembert. Do share it with me."

Mrs. Bill felt herself wrapped in warmth and comfort; she had not felt herself so little lonely for years. She smiled up at him. "I'd like to," she confessed, "but I suppose one ought to think of one's reputation. Couldn't you take me somewhere else?"

"I could—but it wouldn't be so cozy."

"And I am tired. I'd like to—Mr. Sullivan, I will."

He laughed like a boy, rang the bell and gave his order anew. And soon there was a pleasant bustle in the room, the table was neatly laid, and Mrs. Bill and Mark Sullivan sat at opposite ends of a little table, each paying a great deal

more attention to the image of the other than to the things they ate and drank and the words they said.

"I do hate eating alone!" said Sullivan when they had been at the table long enough to have finished a meal of twice the length and elaboration.

"So do I," she murmured.

"I hate living alone. I hate doing anything alone. Don't you?"

She admitted it, and sighed.

"It is very cozy here and you have been very nice to me, Mr. Sullivan, but the time for enjoying myself is over; and the time of thinking of home and reputation has come. I must think of Lucy, too. I could bite out my tongue for having given away her folly to you."

"To me, of all people, you mean?" Sullivan was helping her into her coat.

"Yes."

"I must perforce think her an angel as long as I live because I did think so once?"

"I suppose that is the theory." Mrs. Bill adjusted her veil with her one good hand.

"You must know—" he began.

Mrs. Bill fastened one button.

"You must know—"

Mrs. Bill fastened another. She knew perfectly well what she must know. It had been almost on his tongue a dozen times; but, like a woman, she went on fastening buttons, looking thoughtfully and innocently into his face the while.

"You must know that it makes no difference to me or to her what I think of Lucy; she is only of importance to me as something that belongs to you."

Mrs. Bill's hand trembled a little as she vainly tried to fasten the last button all over again. "My muff, please," she said.

He took the muff in his hand, but held steadily to his course, refusing to be put aside.

"Don't you know it?"

"Know what?"

"That I love you."

Mrs. Bill was an honest woman. She put subterfuge aside and looked him frankly in the face. "Yes, I do know it. I do believe it. I—am not sorry."

But this is not the place for you to tell me of it, Mr. Sullivan. My mind should be on other things. Let us wait."

His eyes followed her ardently, but he submitted. He had not even touched her.

"May I go down to Glendale with you? Not to make myself a nuisance—to be sure you are safe."

She laughed and shook her head. It touched her a little, nevertheless, to think that a woman who had been risking her neck four or five days a week, and who had come and gone unregarded, could not be safe on a frequented road with a faithful and able-bodied chauffeur just because a man had found out he loved her.

He went down with her, put her into the car and disposed the robes about her. He begged her to let him know if he might be of any assistance with regard to Miss Parmer; and asked her when he might come to Glendale.

"Tomorrow?"

"Not till the next day, please. I must devote all tomorrow to thinking of Lucy. Good-bye."

The car shot away. Mrs. Bill in the midst of her furs was very warm and comfortable; her heart was at peace and she had almost forgotten how her wrist ached. She was ashamed to find that the image of Lucy was so far away she could not bring it back again into the circle of thoughts.

"That is the kind of love-making," she thought, "that suits us when we are beginning to be middle-aged."

XXI

Lucy stirred uneasily in her sleep and then opened her eyes. It was broad daylight, and the grim figure of her aunt's middle-aged maid stood beside her bed with a decidedly sour expression on her face.

"What is it, Bennett? What time is it?"

"It's nine o'clock, Miss Lucy; and young Mr. Parmer is below in his motor waiting for you."

"Then I suppose I must get up," observed Lucy without eagerness. "Give me my bath-robe, Bennett, and my slippers."

Bennett did as she was told, but still lingered.

"Well, Bennett, what is it? Whose doom does that look foreshadow?"

"It's your aunt, Miss Lucy. She didn't say I was to tell you, but she's in a high fever. I just telephoned for the doctor. Some nonsense or other took her up to town yesterday afternoon just after she'd sprained her wrist getting thrown from her horse. I thought you might like to know, Miss Lucy. But don't stop going off with Mr. Parmer on that account. She's helpless and can't stop you."

"That will do, Bennett." Lucy was well aware that the old servant had never liked her, that she resented her careless attitude toward Mrs. Ware, and was doubtless quite happy at having a legitimate excuse for giving Miss Parmer a piece of her mind. Moreover a something in the woman's eye as she mentioned Mr. Parmer warned Lucy that Bennett's information went perhaps below the surface. The woman had a most diabolical instinct for guessing what was up. "Did Mrs. Ware give you any message for me?"

"Said she'd like to see you, miss, as soon as you was up."

Lucy pondered. Her impulse of getting even with Win had not outlasted the night. However her little schemes and plots, founded all on her own frank egotism, might work toward the same end, it was seldom that Miss Lucy's changing whims allowed her, in cold blood, to carry out any one campaign to a definite end. She was not at all repentant for her attempted elopement with Harry Parmer; having made the attempt, she now felt a little bored with Harry and curious to know how she stood with Win. She recognized, too, that her feeling for Winchester would outlast a hundred such rebellions. "If I had really married Harry," she thought, with perfect composure, "it would have been just the same. Then I should have

been just like Mrs. Gordon Spencer myself."

Aloud she said: "Does my aunt know that Mr. Parmer is here?"

"No, Miss Lucy," Bennett pursed her lips and looked sourer than ever.

"Tell him to go away and not to come back until I send for him."

Bennett proceeded upon this errand with a good will, for she was a faithful soul, and hated having her mistress's peace of mind invaded.

Meanwhile Mrs. Bill, for perhaps the first time in her life, was settled for a serious illness. The doctor came and pronounced it pneumonia. The news went flashing about the Glendale colony, and Colonel Hollis, the Clipstons and the Crawfords got used to coming every day to her door, to be turned away with the news that she was better, but could see nobody. Baskets of roses and violets took to coming down from town; but the first lot had hardly wilted when Mrs. Bill had turned the corner and was rapidly bowling along the highroad to recovery.

Quite a day or two before she had expected it, Mrs. Clipston, descending from the carriage to inquire, was smilingly assured that she might go up to see her friend. As she started to run up the broad, open stairs, preparatory to arriving at the top in her usual puffing and panting state, she passed a gentleman coming down. It was late in the afternoon, the hall was unlighted, and Mrs. Clipston, supposing the man to be a doctor, hardly paused to look at him; so she arrived at the top of the stairs with an impression merely of the stranger's gravity and seriousness. Then it suddenly occurred to her who the man was.

Mrs. Bill was sitting before the fire in a large chair, in a very becoming *négligée*, not looking half so sick as a convalescent has a perfect right to look. She was genuinely glad to see Mrs. Clipston; and that lady, after a greeting of judiciously tempered exuberance, broke out at once with her discovery.

"Who do you suppose, my dear, I met just now as I was coming up?"

Mrs. Ware's pallor was invaded by a faint blush.

"Of all people on earth, Mark Sullivan! What could he have been doing here? Did he come about Lucy?"

"No, he came about me."

"And you saw him!" Mrs. Clipston, glancing at her friend's pale cheeks and invalid's costume, was full of a consuming wonder at the implied intimacy.

"Yes." Gertrude blushed again.

"I thought you hated the man!"

"I suppose I did—once. Jane, *do* you suppose I should be making an awful fool of myself?"

Jane performed a *volte face* with the astonishing celerity that friendship demands on such occasions.

"I think you would be doing the very wisest thing you could do, my dear. The point is, you ought to be married; and while I should have preferred your taking one of *us*, I always liked the man myself. So does Archie; or if he doesn't I'll see that he does. Bless you, he's a splendid fellow! They say he saved Andy Crawford from ruin and put him on his feet again. And I heard only last week that he's one of *the* Sullivans—a great-great-great-grandson of Governor Sullivan of Massachusetts. I always thought he was one of those Boston Irishmen."

"Nonsense!" returned Mrs. Bill red-denying. "I could have told you that months ago."

Mrs. Clipston laughed slyly to herself at her friend's new sensitiveness to criticism of the man she had once been so fond of blackguarding. She longed to know how the hunting question had been settled between them and abandoned regretfully a joking allusion of exquisite wit that hung upon the end of her tongue.

"I had some news for you that I thought would be a tonic, but it seems very pale and unimportant now. It's about Lucy."

"Oh, Jane—it was *so* good of you to take her home with you while I was sick."

"Good of me! Maybe it was; but I rather fancy Miss Lucy will be glad when the time comes for her to escape.

I've taken the little minx in hand and done my best to persuade her on which side of her bread the butter is. I've filled her head with the enchantment of church weddings, and quite outdone myself on the management and subjection of husbands."

"Then she's made it up with Win? I'm so glad, because I really think in her way she's in love with him."

Mrs. Clipston laughed slyly. "Made it up? He never knew there was anything wrong! He minds her little tantrums about as much as I mind a mosquito bite! I had to persuade him to pretend to be fearfully angry, or I dare say she'd have been eloping by this time with somebody else. I should have been her protector, not you; horses are your specialty, but the cajoling of human beings is certainly mine."

"And Mrs. Gordon Spencer?"

"Nothing in it! Nothing now, at any rate. She sailed yesterday and Win is still here. Not that Mrs. Spencer mayn't turn up again, or if not Mrs. Spencer, somebody else; but Lucy must take her chances like all the other women."

Mrs. Bill sighed. "I don't quite like it; but then the tame and safe are not for her. And I'm rather glad that that nice little Parmer boy is out of her clutches. She'd have made him wretched, and once she's married to Win I hope she'll let Harry alone. How very destructive these innocent young girls can be!"

Mrs. Clipston shrugged her shoulders. "You should be glad at any rate that one man had the good sense to escape her."

XXII

ALMOST before Mrs. Bill had acknowledged to herself the port she was heading for, Bennett had told Hughes, the butler, Hughes had told the cook and the cook had passed it from the kitchen to the stable. In this secret cabinet there were as many points of view as there were votes. Bennett had in general a poor opinion of matrimony,

having begun her own career saddled with a drunken husband, and moreover rather feared the waning of her own influence with a husband in the house; but she also had an idea that in acquiring Mark Sullivan Mrs. Ware was getting the better of Lucy, who was no favorite of hers. Hughes was neutral; while cook frankly acknowledged she would be glad of a man to cook for.

"I'd rather make Irish stews for a day-laborer than cook day in and day out for a passel of women!" she declared. "Not that *she* ain't hearty and particular about what she eats. But there! one day she's all for steaks and roasts, and the next it's patties and timbales and mushrooms under glass. I like an appetite you can depend on, and nobody's got it but a man."

It was not to be expected that anything that threatened the prosperity of the stable could please Barney. He wagged his head a good deal and drew his breath sympathetically through his teeth as he watched Tom curry down the horses. He muttered vague threats at the possibility that Mr. Sullivan by right of his position should choose to dictate to himself or Mrs. Ware as to how many horses should be kept and what their daily proportion of oats should be.

His mistress did not share these apprehensions. She believed herself perfectly able to combine the management of a stable and that of a husband. In fact, she quite trembled to think that if it had come to a choice between them, how very easy it would have been to give up what had hitherto been the dearest part of life. She feared she had allowed herself to develop into a coarse, sporting kind of a creature, romping alone about the country as she had been doing. She was reconciled in advance to the tenderness that would probably dictate her looking for gaps and gates instead of taking fences as they came.

"Mark!" she exclaimed suddenly one day, from the midst of such a reverie. It was the week before their marriage, and she was to be taken South immediately after to complete her convalescence. "I'm going to sell Sultan. And

in return you must promise me something."

"What is it? Am I to begin my riding lessons all over again according to your own system?"

"Of course you are to do that! That's beyond and above a mere bargain. And I'll succeed, too: those muscles weren't given you for nothing. What I am asking you for is only a bit of truth. Do you remember the day I met you in the Glendale Club and you told me you were engaged to Lucy?"

"Surely."

"And before I met you in the billiard-room I had been gossiping on the veranda. Did you hear what I said?"

He reddened a little on the cheekbones and laughed. "Of course I did! You said I was a clown and you'd be ashamed to have me in your house."

"What a beast I was! Then why, why were you so kind and forbearing then, and why have you never taken it out on me since?"

He paused before he answered, being slow, manlike, in searching out the secret of his own motives and emotions. "Because I wanted to save you the mortification of knowing you had hurt my feelings—and then, when I knew better, because I didn't care—and then—"

He stopped and looked at her with humorous tenderness. "You will think I am concealed."

"Well—what was the final reason?"

"Because I foresaw how sweet my revenge would be when you knew that for once in your life you had made a huge and gigantic mistake!"



THE REMEMBERED LAND

· And he wept, remembering his father and the land of Lyonesse."—*The Romance of Tristan and Iseult.*

By Grace Duffield Goodwin

THEY come to me in deeps of night,
They haunt my steps by day,
Those lost and fair and dreaming years
So far—so far away!
And I who know both sin and pain
Am clean as souls that pray.

The unforgot, the visioned years,
Are far and far away;
And all the flowering hills of morn
Are touched with twilight gray;
Distant and dear the sunlit path
That leads from yesterday!

For all the noonday world is wide—
And some are worn and gray—
But deathless dwells the golden dream
Of Love and yesterday;
O youth's lost land of Lyonesse,
How far thou art away!

July, 1908—4

MADAME D'ARBEL

By Beatrix Demarest Lloyd

“WELL, you see,” said Haven, “life is full of contradictions.”

“Oh, oh!” she scoffed. “Adam himself should be ashamed of the platitude.”

“So he would, God rest his soul,” said he. “The advantage of the present age is that we ‘have done better since.’ I don’t know why we should not say things and feel things simply because someone has said and felt them before. For that matter, if one is to be consistent, which heaven forbid, kisses are the most outworn and obvious of conversation, and yet—”

She glowed in a smile. “I was only trying to be superior. Let us give it up. I want to say obvious things. Don’t let’s be clever.”

She looked around her at the blossoming, green, refulgent beauty of the Summer in middle France and seemed to find it quite subtle enough. They were standing in the road and at a little distance from them a touring-car was undergoing a minor operation at the hands of their chauffeur.

“People on their honeymoon can afford to be obvious,” he laughed. “Certainly they are to everyone else, and why not to themselves?”

“Let me be stupid,” she said. “Don’t you think we are wrong about the contradictions? Isn’t it just that we don’t understand, that we regard them as such?”

“But I do not, at the moment, take a violent interest in the things I do not understand,” he said. “I am a mere man and I am hungry. I can understand that perfectly, since I have not broken my fast since breakfast, and that was a mere cup of coffee and a bit of bread.”

“Mere man and mere coffee,” she replied. “Well?”

“Well, I have been wondering if perchance, as we may say, since we are to adopt the obsolete, if perchance in yonder hut one might find the wherewithal and the willingness to afford us a mite to eat?”

“It’s a very worthy notion,” said she. “And while the word hut might jar on the prideful susceptibilities of the gentry that live therein, if they understood it, the chances are they don’t, and won’t be offended.”

“As you say,” he returned, “it is all a matter of understanding.” He made their intention known to the chauffeur, who nodded and gave his benign consent and went on with the nursing of his favorite engine. They walked leisurely toward the little house.

“Do you know, it’s not a bad little place, now one comes to look at it,” said Haven. “I should be quite content myself to possess it.”

There was a brilliant garden of flowers, exquisitely tended, at the front and sides. The house was painted white and there were whiter curtains at the windows. In the rear was a tiny stable, supposedly for the one cow that was eloquently expressing contentment in the field beyond. Over the stable door was a little window with another of the white curtains. Presumably this was the abiding-place of the man in jeans whom they could see bending his back to the task of weeding in the kitchen-garden.

“It is nice,” said Mrs. Haven, looking at the cow. “Fancy, Jerrold, spending one’s whole life with nothing before one’s face but food!”

“My dear, you speak at the wrong time. The idea quite appeals to me in

my present condition. I hope in another hour to be able to agree with you."

She laughed as he stepped ahead of her and knocked at the door.

"These flowers are dearly loved by someone," she said, looking about on the scarlet and white masses of blossom. "It must be pleasant to be a flower, to give so much pleasure by merely existing."

"You surely ought to know," he answered, smiling at her. "Someone approaches."

She turned to him and watched the door. It opened in a moment and the rotund figure of an elderly woman in a tremendous apron appeared on the threshold. Her broad face with high cheek-bones and tip-tilted nose was seldom as perplexed as it appeared in that moment. She was so evidently not the guiding spirit of the little place of flowers, that Haven knew her for a servant.

"*Bonjour*," said he as he pulled off his cap. "*Madame est chez elle?*"

"*Oui, monsieur.*"

"*Je voudrais bien lui parler un instant, s'il vous plaît.*"

"*Si monsieur se donnerait la peine d'entrer?*"

She stood aside from the doorway and he turned toward his wife. Mrs. Haven came up to him and smiled at the woman.

"*Bonjour.*"

"*Bonjour, madame.*"

They passed her as they entered the little hall and stood there. The woman closed the door after one amazed look out into the roadway as if she wondered how on earth they came to be there. Then she opened another inner door of a living-room and politely bade them enter.

As they were left alone together, Eleanor Haven faintly exclaimed, "Well, of all things!"

"Isn't it?" he assented.

They stood looking about them. There was one large, unusually handsome rug in the middle of the bare wooden floor, and there were three remarkable paintings to embellish the plain walls. Before the stone chimney-

place was drawn up a long, deep couch with many pillows, and supporting this at the back a low table, almost as long, held a great bowl of flowers and many books. There was a case of more books in the other end of the room and between the white ruffled curtains at the windows a cabinet of Dresden. Against the wall stood a little grand piano.

"Unexpected, eh, what?" said Haven. He scrutinized the picture nearest him. "Brenneau," he said.

Eleanor moved over to the piano and looked at the music standing open on the rack. "Grieg," she said.

"They're all Brenneau, by George," said Haven. "I wonder who on earth—"

There was a sound of footsteps just outside the door and they both turned toward it. The woman who came into the room was sufficient explanation of the place, and yet amazement still endured that she should be there at all. She was tall and of exquisite figure, and she wore her plain cotton frock with a subtle elegance. Her abundant black hair was parted and rolled smoothly back and the great coils of it gleamed at the nape of her neck. Her brows and eyes were black, very black, set in the whiteness of her skin, and her beautiful mouth was as red as her own flowers. She must have been in the late thirties, but there were no lines of approaching age in her face. She radiated a quiet peacefulness. Never had Haven seen any placidity that equaled the deep serenity looking out from her dark, thoughtful eyes.

She had given them each in turn a quick, questioning look, and now she put out one of her large, white, exquisite hands and took that of Eleanor. "What a pleasure," she said sincerely, with a happy smile. "My name is D'Arbel. Has your motor come to grief?"

Haven, who had felt uncomfortable at the thought of his errand, relaxed under the influence of her charming manner.

"Yes," he said. They were speaking in French. "This is my wife, Mrs.

Haven, and I am, therefore, Mr. Haven. You are very good to call our intrusion a pleasure."

"But it is the truth," she exclaimed. "I see so few people nowadays like you!" She led Eleanor around to seat her on the divan and took her place beside her. "Take off your wraps, please, and be at home, monsieur. I hope you are going to remain long enough to let me give you something to eat."

Haven laughed as he slipped out of his coat. "I am crushed with your goodness," he said. "To be quite frank with you, I came to beg just that. I am very hungry. And I took my courage in both hands to come to your door and see if there was not some hope of finding a kind heart within that would take pity on us."

"The flowers, I think, were more encouraging than our own boldness," said Eleanor, as she untied her veil.

"Yes, aren't they pretty?" said Madame D'Arbel. "I take all the care of them myself. They are a dear assurance to me that dreams come true. I have always wanted that garden and now you see I have it."

She rose as she was speaking. "Will you excuse me one moment?" she said.

She went out of the room as gracefully as she had entered it.

Haven watched her as she moved away, and then came over to stand before his wife. "What on earth—" he said and came to a helpless pause.

"Don't come to me for enlightenment," she said, matching his tone. "I am utterly bewildered. Such beauty, such manner—in this wilderness!"

"It's a very beautiful wilderness," said Haven, "but it is surely deserted enough to make her presence a mystery. I wonder if she lives here all alone. There are certainly no indications of a Monsieur D'Arbel anywhere about."

She was gone quite a little time, while they remained alone with the puzzle of it all. When she came back she was carrying a tray of glasses, a

bottle of red wine and a crystal pitcher of cold water.

"You must be very thirsty," she said. "Is it not warm today?" She set the tray down upon the table and poured wine and water into the glasses. "I cannot tell you what a pleasure it is for me to have you here. You see, I live all alone with Julie, and although I am never lonely, I do sometimes wish that someone who—who spoke the language, you know, was about somewhere." She smiled at them again as they took their glasses gratefully from her lovely hands. "Julie is getting a little luncheon ready for us, and do not despair, monsieur, for she is very brisk."

Her boast of the servant proved unqualifiedly true, for almost before she had had time to ask them a few polite questions and learn that they were from New York and were on their honeymoon, which seemed to delight her, the broad face of Julie appeared in the doorway and announced that *déjeuner* was served.

She preceded them into the little dining-room, which was as quaint a combination of peasant plainness and patrician elegance as the chamber they had just left. There were two or three handsome pieces of mahogany, including the circular table which shone bare of a cloth, and on the sideboard were ranged exquisite pieces of plate. The table was covered here and there with lace, and glimmered with bright silver and rare china. There were herrings in white wine, and cold meats, and a salad of crisp fresh vegetables, home-made butter and more of the wine and water. Haven could almost have said grace in his thankfulness, had it not entailed a delay.

Madame D'Arbel was as graciously efficient at table as she had been in the living-room. She talked, she made them talk, she saw what they wanted before they knew they wanted it and they received it hardly knowing they had done so. The perfection of her attitude was more perceptible to Eleanor Haven even than to her husband, for she reflected that she might herself

have been a little flurried at having a bare half-hour's notice before the entertaining of two sudden guests and that in the depths of the country. But even if Haven did not analyze it quite from the housekeeper's point of view he did marvel again and again at the beatific serenity of the face before him. He wondered what her life had been to produce such peace, and he regretted that they would in an hour or so go away leaving the mystery still unsolved. But little did he count the way of a woman with a woman. When their little repast was over, and he went out to see what progress the chauffeur had made and to carry him the dainty sandwiches and flagon of the inevitable wine and water, the two women returned to the comfort of the great divan together. And when he returned softly, they were deep in the subject.

"And you have never been married?" Eleanor was saying as he came in.

"No," said Madame D'Arbel. "Pray smoke, monsieur, if you care to. You will find matches and a tray on the table, but no cigarettes, I am sorry to say, for I don't smoke any more." She turned back to Mrs. Haven and settled a pillow more comfortably. "You see, I was a little girl when we went to Paris. Oh, when I think what I must have been—an ignorant, ugly, countrified little creature, with cavernous eyes and straggling hair! I had never been taught anything, you see. My mother and father did not even speak as they should. We were poor and sordid and ignorant."

It seemed hard to believe, looking at her as she lay back against the cushions in her graceful ease. "We lived that way for several years. And during those years I built up the fabric of my dream of happiness."

"And what was that?" asked Eleanor.

Madame D'Arbel laughed softly and spread out her white hands. "But what you see before you," she said. "A little place in the country, some flowers and a cow! And I made up my mind to get it, and spend all my youth getting it, if necessary." The smile vanished from her lips and her eyes became dreamy. Haven had lighted

a cigarette and dropped into a chair near them.

"First," said the woman in her calm, sweet voice, "first there was Béranger, He was an idle, pleasant gentleman who loved books. He began by teaching me to read. When I went to live with him, I had begun to know Villon and Verlaine and de Maupassant and Hugo and Balzac. He taught me how to dress, too, and when he died I was about twenty and almost presentable. He left me his books—some of them are over there—and the better off by some few thousand francs and a mind in which the love of beautiful words and thoughts had been cultivated. Before that, a bill of washing was the utmost I had known or guessed or cared about in literature!"

She laughed softly and then again her eyes filled with the past and she became quite grave.

"Then there was de la Ghetto. He was a quaint personality, virile and sharp, with nerves that sometimes obscured his better heart. We lived together five years. It is strange to me now how deliberately I wrung him dry. He could play on any instrument that anyone would lay in his hands, and fairly well. But the piano—well, he could do things with it that made you feel you had never heard music before. So glowing, so spontaneous, so full of temperament, so pungent, and with such a brilliant ease! I made him teach me to play. Oh, he hated it. I was a stupid little creature, but I was determined. I would learn to play, and I did. Before we separated, which we did when he wandered off to Russia, even he had a word of praise for my execution. Then for a year I indulged myself in solitude. I lived in two little rooms with the books and the piano, and would take long walks in the country and sing at the top of my voice. It was wonderful to live and love these things that had been so alien to my childhood. But even when I was rejoicing most in them, my eyes were ever on the little homes about me as I walked and I was planning my own and counting over my pennies in the bank.

"Of course, that year depleted the pennies somewhat and I realized that if the little house were to be mine I must not loiter along like that. So when Brenneau saw me and asked me to come to him, I went. He was the last, Brenneau. And I think my life with him taught me more than all the rest. We lived in a queer place, with an immense studio and an inconvenient kitchen and the most absurd bedroom. But it was a paradise in other ways. Men liked Brenneau. And a rainy afternoon or a bright Sunday, or a long, friendly night, the place would always hold a group of clever fellows, smoking and drinking and talking. I used to sit and listen and feel myself growing at every word. They talked of everything, art, politics, love, death, courage and cookery. They were like an encyclopedia to me, made interesting. I listened and learned. Oh, I had learned a lot by that time—I could tell a Monet from the best of Sisley at a glance. I knew all about china and porcelain down to a franc's worth of value. I designed costumes for myself that were painstakingly described in the journals. I held my own in conversation with the authors of the day and knew all their books better than they did, and Adolphe Merschel came to hear me play. When I was thirty I told Brenneau that my work was over. He was very sorry to have me go, poor fellow, and he gave me a lot of things—those paintings and the silver we had picked up in old curio shops, and quite a lot of money. For a painter he always managed remarkably well about money. So I bought this little place and arranged it to please me, and got Julie and her nephew to take care of me and my cow, and here I am. I have lived here five years."

Eleanor was staring at her. "But are you not unhappy?" she said.

"Do I look unhappy?" asked the woman, smiling. "No, I do not know the meaning of the word. I have my music and my books and my store-house in my head, and my dear out-of-doors and my beloved solitude."

"But do you never regret the price you had to pay for them?"

"Never," she said, "oh, but never. What was I?—a crude little child without any brains. I have learned many things and I have achieved my dreams."

She looked up, half startled from her quietude by a rapping at the door.

"Car's all ready," said the blunt 'Enery Stryker who served them, poking in his disheveled head. "And if we're to make What's-its-name before dark we'd better be starting."

"Very well," said Haven, rising. "Coming right along."

The women got up and Madame D'Arbel helped Eleanor to resume her veils and wraps. Somehow they seemed to have nothing further to say, although their eyes observed one another in the sympathy of mutual liking and admiration. The woman from the Western shore, from her different viewpoint was struggling with the problem of the tranquillity of the face into which she stood looking.

Their acknowledgments and her farewells were said again and again as they hesitated in the doorway of her house. Then the car came to the path and halted, making an impatient sound as if it would fain be off. It called them like an imperative voice, and with the last incoherent exclamations of gratitude and regret they hurried down and Haven helped her in. As the car started forward they waved to her, and Madame D'Arbel, standing in the sunshine, placidly blew them a serene kiss and smiled at them.

Eleanor turned her eyes on Haven as they whirled away from the place of flowers. "You said that life was full of strange contradictions," she said. "The woman is utterly happy. She has no regrets."

"And you said," he returned gently, "that perhaps we only called them contradictions because we did not understand."

Eleanor Haven sank back in the tonneau and stared across the fields. "I have learned many things and I have achieved my dreams," she said softly.

NORMANDY CIDER

By Robert Gilbert Welsh

THE old Norman Abbey is fallen away!
The cavalry forces
Now saddle their horses
Where, back in the old times, the monks used to pray,
And matins and vespers are marked by the din
Of the troops riding out and the troops riding in.
If you long for the quiet of cloister and cell,
And the humor that hides in book, candle and bell,
Turn here to the north, past the corn and the clover,
By the old crumbling wall with the vines clambering over,
Where the Abbey's great cellars yawn wider and wider,
You may gather this story of Normandy cider.

There came to the Abbey one Midsummer day,
The newly-made Abbot, gaunt, grisly and gray.
His face was close-shaven, forbidding and grim—
A gargoyle seemed jovial in contrast to him—
And the good brothers nine
At the hour of compline,
Prayed that straightway to heaven the Abbot be ta'en
For he seemed far too good for existence mundane.
"There are nine brothers here, getting rations for twelve,"
Said the Abbot next morning, beginning to delve
In affairs somewhat earthly for such a good man;
"Hereafter, you'll eat on a less ample plan.
You will dine, let me say, upon six pounds of beef,
With green stuff for relish. Let supper be brief,
On a spare bit of mutton. In Lent you will fast,
Or partake, if you must, on such fare as the cast
Of your flies may allure from the river below.
Then, fearing your spirits grow faltering and slow,
With a view to encourage your prayers and your tunes,
On feast days, you'll each get—a dishful of prunes!
That's for meat. Let me think,
What will serve for your drink?
Now I, far from well, for my weak stomach's sake,
Of a delicate vintage am forced to partake.
(Ah, me, *miserere!*)
I'll drink old Canary,
While you who are stronger
Quaff deeper and longer.
No brew in the world has a fame that is wider—
I have it! Your drink shall be Normandy cider!"

An ominous silence came over them all.
 From Chapter they stole out,
 Their pittance to dole out,
 For monks are obedient, whatever befall,
 Save one, a lay brother, intent on escape,
 No pinched meals for him, and no juice save the grape.
 Though he shared the delights of their prosperous day,
 In the lean time for him, it was, "Up and away!"
 "It is likely," thought he, "they'll have little to eat.
 I don't thrive on virtue—I'll beat a retreat—
 So I'll hide. While the Abbey in slumber is quiet,
 I'll hie me away to the town and its riot!"
 With both hands he caught up his saintly apparel,
 Ran downstairs and hid in an empty wine-barrel.

What cider remained in the cellars that year,
 Was poor stuff, the friars had reason to fear,
 And Lubin the cellarer grumbled apace,
 A scowl on his jolly, round, browned Norman face.
 "I gave our best cider to old Marie,
 When she paid me double the reaping-fee;
 And more I gave to Clarestun,
 When his daughter married the weaver's son;
 The hardest I gave to Crepin—on my life,
 It made him so tipsy, he pummeled his wife;
 And here and there, from day to day,
 I've given draught after draught away,
 'Why keep it,' says I, 'to get musty and old,
 When we've white wine, red wine and wine like gold!'—
 What cider we have is thin and rough—"
 Cried the Abbot sternly, "Lubin, enough!
 Pour all that remains into yonder cask."
 So Lubin set straightway about his task,
 Gathered it all as the Abbot decreed,
 With many a murmur at such a deed,
 Then poured it where the Abbot had said—
 It rained on the hidden lay brother's head!
 No word did he utter,
 With hiss and sputter
 He leaped from the cask and rushed out of the place,
 And poor Lubin saw, with a pale, pale face,
 The hint of a hoof and the twist of a horn,
 While a sulphurous smell to his nostrils was borne,
 And with eyebrows upraised from their usual level,
 The Abbot observed, *sotto voce*, "The Devil!"
 And wonder of wonder,
 When Lubin put under
 That spigot, his mouth, dreading what he should taste,
 He did not draw back with anticipate haste.
 He stayed a long time, and his mouth opened wider—
 A marvelous change had come over that cider!
 'Twas no longer thin, and 'twas no longer rough,
 And when, in a flagon, he drew off the stuff,
 'Twas round and full with the generous glow
 That the fruits of the Normandy hillsides know.

When held to the light, what a fine yellow gleam
 Danced over the juice, like the truant gleam
 On the apple boughs late in the Fall—or atune
 With the light on the orchard grass, early in June!
 And the brothers who drank, cried no more "*Miserere!*"
 Nor longed for their old favorite sips of Canary,
 But quaffed this good liquor, and cried in their glee,
 "For Normandy cider—*Benedicite!*"

'Twas centuries since, and old Lubin is dead.
 Long ago, the last mass for the Abbot was said,
 But over in Normandy, down to this day,
 Thin cider or rough, poured through sulphur, they say.
 Grows smooth and delicious, and long, long ago,
 A monk found the secret. The folk do not know
 In what way he learned it—he carefully hid it—
 The Devil himself only knows how he did it!



CONSOLATION

CERTAIN hitherto inanimate objects—the useless things that people feel bound to preserve because they were gifts—had, for the nonce, become animated, and realizing the contempt in which they were secretly held, were the victims of the deepest dejection. The pen-wiper, the cuff-and-collar box, the turgid work of the ponderous poet, the fragile paper-knife, the smoker's set, the ill-looking ink-well and all the rest of their purposeless ilk, looked at one another and sighed. Then at last one, more philosophical than the rest, spoke up.

"I realize that I am of no known use," said he, "but at least I am not intentionally harmful. I am thankful to say that I am not a gossip, a foreign nobleman or an amateur entertainer."

"I rejoice," said another, taking heart, "that I do not sing college songs nor eat and advocate raw nuts."

"At least," remarked a third, "I am not a precocious child nor a candidate for anything."

"I have never sold tickets for an intellectual treat, made an after-dinner speech, or insulted and humiliated a newly married couple," testified the next.

And so it went around the circle, till at last it came the first speaker's turn again.

"Well," said he, "it appears that our status is, after all, not as miserable as it might be. We are at least innocuous, and not wilful and malignant pests. None of us, so far as I know, has ever taken a straw vote, written obituary poetry or organized a new fraternal order. There is not among us an evangelist, an up-getter of amateur theatricals or a professional reformer. None of us are balloon racers, tenor singers, wags, raconteurs, elevators of anything, or propagandists of any sort. It therefore seems that our offenses are but the sins of omission, rather than those of commission."

MORAL: From this we should learn that there is a vast deal of satisfaction to be derived from the knowledge that there is always somebody more insignificant than ourselves.

TOM P. MORGAN.

THREE FOOLS AND A WISE ONE

By Ella Perry Midgley

A STORY without a moral is like an egg without salt; and a moral is void unless you can point it at someone. I never have been able to discover a moral to this story—much less to apply it. So I will write it, dear reader, and let you try it.

There were three persons in the story—a husband, his wife and a bachelor. There might have been a fourth—but she was wise.

The first person was John Harper, a handsome, well-groomed fellow who made money and friends—and kept both; kindly, clean-lived, phlegmatic—a man's man; that was John Harper. He was the best of the three and I liked him least.

The second person was Cynthia Harper (John's wife), a graceful, charming blond with splendid eyes; a brilliant, passionate woman—a gentlewoman—who wrote good poetry and read hearts—a man's woman and a woman's woman too; that was Cynthia. She was second-best and I liked her second-best.

The third person was good-looking Ralph Sterling, an artist and dreamer, well-born, clever, ardent and altogether lovable—a woman's man, though not in the least effeminate. He was the worst of the trio, if you please, and I liked him best.

The three were the rear-guard of a week-end party that I, Laura Pendleton, widow, had entertained at my country house, Woodhurst. They were returning to the city in the evening of the day upon which this story opens; all of them were my life-long friends and, as life-long friends should, they all

spoke freely to me, keeping back only that which men and women always do. It may be that the moral of the story lies in what they left unsaid; but I can only tell you what they said; I come in only as the chorus.

Ralph spoke to me first. It was a chill morning in November. He entered the library where I sat, flung his hat on the table and himself in a chair beside me, before the fire.

"I've come to a steep place, Laura," he said.

I did not reply. I am the one who was wise.

"Possibly you can guess," he continued.

"Possibly."

"You are surprised?"

"No. Sorry."

"Cynthia—"

"Cynthia is a good woman."

"I have never spoken of her to any one before—"

"You should not have spoken of her to anyone now. She—"

"Say what you please about me," he flashed out, "but—"

"I'm not liable to say anything *against* you." Our friendship was more than a word.

"But I'll not listen to anything against Cynthia—"

"I'm not going to say anything against Cynthia, either. I wish, however, she had kept out of your life."

"It wasn't life—before."

"Sickly sentimentality!"

He bent forward and laid a hand on my arm—an unsteady hand.

"You don't think so, my friend."

I stared silently into the fire for a long time. Men and women will be

men and women—and an empty heart is an empty heart.

"What right have you to take—"

"The right of any man to take, if he *can*, that which will make his life blessed beyond description; even a bachelor has a heart, you know, Laura."

"So has a married man."

He looked at me under his brows. "Do you think he has?"

I stared at the fire again. "Yes, I think so." I had not pushed the opinion to demonstration. I liked Ralph Sterling better than John Harper.

"I wonder if he would feel it much if—anything happened?"

"Very much."

"You don't imagine that he cares—for her?"

"He hasn't the consolation of caring for anyone else," I answered evasively.

"He couldn't. He—it's not in him—"

"He doesn't permit himself the attempt."

"His virtues are in evidence. I suppose, however, that you will admit that a virtuous man can be very trying."

"A man can be very trying without being virtuous."

"People don't usually find *me* trying, do they, Laura?" wistfully.

I shook my head. "No, you are very likable."

He tapped on the arm of his chair with his fingers. "Why?"

"Because it's so easy for you to like others. You don't want to hurt anybody, Ralph?" He shook his head gravely. "Not even—"

"No. I've been his friend."

"You have no right—"

"I've a life to live."

"So has Cynthia." It was my best card.

"Without me?"

"God knows!— Anyhow, Cynthia can't give you what you want."

"I want *her*."

"You want her as she is—a good woman. You can't have her."

"I want her *anyhow*. I can't do without her."

"You can be a man and—try."

"Try!" He laughed mirthlessly. "Do you think we haven't tried?"

"Go away."

"I went away—and came back."

"Go again—and don't come back."

He rose and stood by the fire. The hand that he laid on the mantel trembled like an aspen.

"You don't understand, Laura; she has eaten into my very life; no other woman has the slightest significance to me." He came back and sat beside me and continued slowly, in a low, tense voice:

"I went away—far away—and I intended never to come back—I'm not, innately, a blackguard—but she was with me, always; she has associated herself with all the sweet, worth-while things of my life; she walked beside me on African deserts as she did on icy Alpine heights; I thought of her always; when I got up and when I lay down; when I worked and when I played; when I was silent and when I talked. After a two years' struggle she drew me back to her. I am thinking of her now. I *want* her. The hunger for her eats into my soul like an eager acid!"

I said nothing for a long time. There seemed nothing to say.

"It is a terrible thing."

"A terrible thing."

"Face it."

"I *have* faced it."

"For Cynthia's sake, if you care for her—"

"If I *care* for her!"

"What will you do?"

"I don't know," he said.

Then he went. I had been thinking for half-an-hour when John Harper entered in his calm, deliberate way. (Gabriel's trumpet would not accelerate John Harper's movements one iota.) He inquired about my health and discussed the weather. I answered in monosyllables until he stopped. Then I turned to him.

"Well, John?"

"It is—my wife."

"My dear friend."

"She or I?"

"Both." I had meant her, but I didn't want to hurt him.

"I have no business to complain of her, I suppose—"

"No."

"You can stop me—if you do not think you had better tell me."

"I assume that I speak to you in confidence?"

"No one but you would ask the question, John."

"You know she does not love me?"

"How should I know?"

He raised his eyebrows. "No one but you would ask the question."

"I withdraw it."

"You know, also, that I—I—"

"I understand" (though I had wondered at his being able *not* to love adorable Cynthia Harper).

"You know, too, that she and Ralph Sterling—" I poked the fire nearly to extinction. "I do not expect you to admit it, of course," he continued; "but you *do*."

"Yes," I admitted.

"You know the sort of woman she is."

"She is a good woman. A *very* good woman."

He leaned back in his chair and sighed. I did not understand the sigh—then.

"We will say that she is a good woman," he said; "I beg your pardon, a *very* good woman. Her goodness, however, is not of the kind to prevent an open scandal."

"Openness does not make the sin."

"It is the open sin that the world condemns."

"It is not so much a question of social decorum as—people's lives."

"The lives of people who live in society."

"At present, yes."

"If she should go away with him—I will put it badly—what is the result?"

"Your wife is ruined."

"And he?"

"Shares her fate, probably."

He leaned a little farther back in his chair and looked at me. "What of *me*?"

"You are secure. Society will be on your side."

"My position will not be affected."

"No."

He smiled inscrutably. An eager look came into his eyes; a flush to his cheek. I had never seen him look handsomer.

"Perhaps it will be for the best," he remarked cryptically.

I sat forward in my chair and gripped the arms. "But, man alive, what about—*them*?" I gasped.

He shrugged his shoulders. "You hardly can expect a husband to care for a wife who confessedly loves another man. And you certainly cannot expect me to care for *him*."

"I care very much for her; I also care—"

"For *him*?" His voice was harsh.

"For the honor and career of a clever, talented, lovable man—my very good friend."

He laughed disagreeably. "I should have remembered that he is a ladies' man."

"He is not mine. I suppose you can take my word for that, John?" He nodded pleasantly. "But I would save him from the future—and Cynthia, too—if I could. I can do nothing, however; but you, John—if you were to speak to Ralph—he is a gentleman and has a sense of the fitness of things."

He looked up at me suddenly, and there was that in his eyes which, for a moment, dazed me. John is a handsome man, as I have said, a very handsome man.

"Has it never occurred to you, Laura, that I might wish to be free from a loveless bondage? Has it never occurred to you that I, too, might have a heart? A life to live? I thought you understood. But a woman's memory—"

There was nothing to remember. I think he had pressed my hand a few times, on very special occasions; I think, too, he did kiss me once or twice. I was ill—and no one thought I could recover. It was nothing that an old friend might not do with propriety—and we were old friends.

"I forget nothing, John; she is your wife—and my friend."

He nodded approvingly. "You are loyal." The look in his handsome eyes made me very uncomfortable. I had never been blind to his faults; but I had liked him, in a way.

"I would prevent it if I could," I persisted unsteadily.

"And I would *not*!" He sat erect and a grim smile flitted across his lips.

"Then there is nothing more to be said," I remarked with finality.

"Nothing more at present—" He arose to his full height—John had a magnificent figure. He extended his hand and I laid mine in it; he held it while he said, pointedly:

"If—if cause for a divorce develops, I shall obtain one."

"Yes?"

"And I shall marry again—if the woman I love will have me. Good morning, Laura."

"Good morning."

Then he went. When John Harper left a room he always seemed to leave a vacuum; this time he left it absolutely bare. It was not *he* that I missed, but my idea of him. The person who is attached to an ideal is more to be pitied than anyone—except the ideal.

I said to myself: "Two of my gods have exposed their yellow clay this morning, and tumbled from their pedestals; I think I'll go and un-pedestal the other." So I went to Cynthia Harper's room.

"I have something unpleasant to discuss," I told her bluntly.

"We need not discuss it unpleasantly," she replied amiably.

"It is about Ralph Sterling."

"Of course."

"He loves you."

"And I love him!" unflinchingly.

"And you do *not* love your husband."

"And *you* know that he does not love me."

"This is shocking, Cynthia; it is not right."

"Some things are neither right nor wrong; only unalterable."

"This is not unalterable; you can

alter it. You know what it will come to. Consider the awful price that will be exacted of you, Cynthia."

She laughed softly. "You remember the Ripple Song, Laura?"

"Where my lover calls I go—
Shame it were to treat him coldly."

That is how I feel about it. Nothing is too much for him to ask of me." In that moment Cynthia was absolutely beautiful; her face was illumined with "the light that never was on land or sea." Her splendid violet eyes with the love-light in them were simply glorious.

"You will recall that the ripple ran red—afterward."

"I am brave enough to give him—even *that*."

"It were braver to refuse it. Think what it means to you."

"You may eliminate me from the question, Laura."

"Then be brave enough to do what is best for him."

She laid her hand gently on my shoulder and her lovely eyes met mine frankly.

"You love him," she said softly; "so do I. Let us consider what is best for him. Think!"

I thought. "He would lose his friends, his social position and career. What can *you* give him?"

She smiled serenely. "*Love!*"

"Love," I echoed absently. I could measure the other things—but not this.

"*Love,*" she repeated. "Consider, Laura; he loses less than I. A man may recover himself; a woman, never—no, don't speak yet. His life is empty; his talents—you know how great they are—are stunted for the want of—love. Well, I can give him that, and in the giving do him an inestimable service. Then, too, there is my life—"

"You have a good husband—"

"Good for you, perhaps—or some other woman"—her eyes flashed with a sudden light—"but not good for me."

"I do not enter into the affair at all, except as an old friend of each of you—a friend who, if she could, would gladly

avert this madness. But I repeat that John Harper is a good man; and he has no one else—"

"I almost wish he had," very softly.

"He could have." She raised her fine eyebrows. "Why, woman alive, don't you know what a handsome man he is?"

"I used to think so years ago; in the old days when I thought he—cared for me. He didn't; besides, we weren't suited, really; but we jogged along somehow. I was fond of him, in a way, till he changed so."

"Changed? I have seen no change in him."

"I suppose you did not notice; it was about the time you were ill; indeed, the change seemed to date from that period."

"No; I did not notice. I think you must have fancied it."

She shook her golden head. "It was evident enough. He is as bored with me as I am with him." With a sudden edge of passion to her charming, velvety voice she continued impetuously: "You don't know what it is, Laura, to live with a man who jars you every time you see him—hear him; from whose touch you instinctively recoil as you would from a live wire."

"You bore it contentedly enough till Ralph Sterling came."

"Till I knew what I had missed. After all, I have a life to live. And, Laura dear, I must live it in my own way."

"Is your way best for Ralph?"

"While he thinks so," she said. "If he alters, I can go."

"If you went now, he would forget."

"The ache would soon dull; not so soon as you imagine, but it would. Only, he wouldn't be the same man. He would shrink—stultify; I want to make him great, famous; I want to see him grow, expand—live up to the glorious possibilities of his talents, if only for a few years. Then—well, it doesn't matter what becomes of me; I shall have lived my life."

"I have known you since we were children together, Cynthia. I beg of you—if I thought prayer were of

any use I would pray of you—let him go."

"He can go when he chooses."

"But he can't choose."

"Then"—a wonderful light came into her eyes—"if he can't do without me he shall have me."

"You have counted the cost?"

"All I have to give—all."

"You know it is wrong."

"If it is best for him, I will do—wrong."

"You don't want to do wrong, Cynthia?"

A dry sob tore her throat. "All my life I have prayed to do right."

"Then I do not understand—"

"No, Laura, friend, you do not understand. It is love!"

"What shall you do, Cynthia?"

"I don't know."

I knew what she would do, unless one of the two men saved her. I was not sure that John could or that Ralph would.

She arose unsteadily, with one hand on her chair. "And now, Laura dear, go—*please go!*"

I kissed her on the cheek. "Whatever happens, Cynthia, God bless you—both."

"God bless you!" she said, very softly, "because you love him, too."

The next day they went. On my way to the city, two days later, I met on the train Bruce Whitney, an old friend of mine—and theirs.

"It's a pity," he reflected, "messing up his life like that. He should have had more sense; but when a fascinating woman like Cynthia Harper gets hold of a man—poor old Sterling."

I agreed with him.

In Kinsley's tea-room, in the city, I met Mrs. Saintness; she was tearful, poor old soul.

"I really can't talk about it," she sniffled. "Cynthia was such a dear girl. Ralph Sterling should be ashamed of himself."

I agreed with her.

I tried vainly to avoid Mrs. Sharp, who met and stopped me on the street.

"I see you know all about it," she said. "Of course poor, dear Mr.

Harper will get a divorce. Nobody can blame *him*. Such an excellent man." (She had an o'er-ripe, marriageable daughter.)

I agreed with her.

Then I took refuge at my brother's. "Don't say a word, Betty," I groaned, to my sister-in-law, "I am sick of hearing about it."

She nodded obediently and went on with her reading for nearly a minute.

"Mr. Harper will get a divorce—"

"I don't mind," I said testily.

Betty shrugged her pretty shoulders. "If you don't mind," she said ominously, "he will marry you!"

I *did* mind. So I went to Egypt (carefully covering my trail) and John Harper eventually married banker George Ludlow's rich widow. He was heard to remark, shortly after his re-

marriage, that Providence had been very kind to him.

Later, at Paris, I met Cynthia and Ralph. They had been married some time and were ridiculously happy; Ralph was becoming famous and society seemed to have forgiven the social indecorum into which their heart-storms had precipitated them. Providence, they assured me, had given to them the fulness of life.

Thus it would seem that neither Providence, society nor Kismet has a moral to point at any one of the three. I am glad for their sakes, since, as I said, they were all my friends; but it seems a rather shabby dispensation that the inconvenience of two years' exile should have fallen on me (who kept carefully out of the whole shocking affair)—the wise one.



A COMMON CASE

By Madeline Bridges

SHE leaned from her window-ledge on high,
The street-lamps made the stars seem dim,
Waiting while weary hours rolled by
To throw the latch-key down to him.

She mused on the time, not long ago—
What wonder her fair brow looked glum?—
When she used to think he'd never go—
And now she thinks he'll never come!



THE NATURAL ORDER

SHE—I think it very strange that man was made first.
HE—Quite the natural order. Money has to be made before a woman can spend it.

A GALVEZ WITH THE GRAY EYES

By Eleanor M. Ingram

“FÉLICIE, Adrienne, hear only! You too, Gaston! I give you four guesses, I give you five—Florian Galvez has come home.”

The golden noonday hush in the courtyard was scattered by the tumultuous entrance. The girl seated on the rim of the fountain gave a cry and overturned all her plate of crumbs to the greedy goldfish.

“*Pas vrai*, André; he is a thousand miles from New Orleans.”

“He is in the next street, mam’zelle. I have seen—I have heard—”

“And now you are speaking,” finished his cousin Gaston lazily. “Why should not Florian Galvez come home?”

The boy drew himself up importantly, his bright dark eyes flashing to the girl in the other corner.

“You would not ask that, Gaston de Bienville, if you had seen what I saw. You are of a conceit since you grew that mustache at which Félicie laughs.”

“What did you see?” demanded Félicie ardently, recovering her plate from among the water-lilies. “Never mind, Gaston; of course I did not laugh, much. Tell us, André; you saw him? How did you know him? He has not been here for nine years, since he was seventeen.”

“If you want me to tell you—”

“Yes, yes.”

“Well, then, this morning I went over to the Galvez house because their pomegranates are ripe and ours are not. And when I had enough I fell asleep in the hammock behind the lilacs in the court. Pouf! all of a sudden I heard the crash of the great door and

presently a strange step in the hall. While I looked out, rubbing my eyes, Monsieur Galvez came through the door beside me and in the door opposite came Florian Galvez. How did I know him? Because I heard tales enough; moreover, he resembles his family: black hair, black brows and lashes, clear dark skin like a girl’s; only his gray eyes were different. So they stood looking at each other, I looking at both; and I believe M’sieu Florian’s thought was to go to his father, but M’sieu Galvez’ face would have stopped the Mississippi at flood-time.

“‘I did not know you were returning,’ he said at last.

“‘Have I come too soon, monsieur?’ asked M’sieu Florian, coolly enough; and truly nine years—

“‘You have come at a bad time,’ M’sieu Galvez answered. ‘Day after tomorrow there is an expedition against Barataria and the pirate La Fitte; you run the danger of being asked to join, with Fernand.’

“I give you my word, Félicie, at that the scarlet rushed finely over M’sieu Florian’s face and his eyes flashed out like white lightning in a black cloud. He is not like Gaston, who appears always half-asleep.

“‘The old superstition yet?’ he exclaimed. ‘Oh, I had lived too long in France to remember how we live in shadows of our own making! The old superstition clings—so I might be met in Italy if they credited me with the evil eye.’

“‘This is a superstition that has been proved,’ said M’sieu Galvez, cold as a stone.

"Not yet, in me," the other. "You might have waited, monsieur. But, I beg pardon for disturbing—for expecting something else. I wish a thousand years of peace and health, which I trouble no more. I should like to see Fernand, that brother whom I blame not at all for a freak of chance; if he cares I shall be on the *Reine Hortense*, which has just arrived in the harbor from France. Monsieur—" He saluted, hand on heart. Ah, he has the *bel air*!"

"He let him go?" cried Félicie.

"You shall hear, my sister. M'sieu Galvez it was who reddened this time. 'No,' he said very sharply. 'I only guard the honor of our name; this is not pleasant to me. While you are in New Orleans, Florian, it is not suitable that you stay under any roof except mine. Remain, since you are here.'"

"M'sieu Florian's eyebrows went up, then he laughed a little as if it broke from him unaware.

"Thank you, monsieur; since it is only for one day I stay, I stay here."

"And then?" urged Félicie.

"Then I leaned too far and fell out of the hammock, crash!

"André Clairmont!" cried M'sieu Galvez, very stern; and then someone caught me off the ground.

"André Clairmont!" echoed M'sieu Florian, and all his voice sparkled and rippled and laughed. "Petit André, whom I left a baby of three. You still like pomegranates, André *de mon cœur*?"

"And suddenly I remembered our garden and someone lifting me high to reach the pomegranate tree, while Adrienne clapped her hands. You remember, Adrie?"

Adrienne Clairmont moved for the first time, rising slowly from her seat beneath the oleander; a girl who stood like a tall lily in the clinging dress that left bare her beautiful throat and arms. Her brown hair was banded with silver ribbon, her brown eyes held silvery glints like the forest pools they resembled.

"I remember," she answered, her deliberate accents softening even the

soft Creole French. "I hope you showed him no more discourtesy, André."

André sat down on the fountain-edge opposite Félicie.

"I embraced him with all my heart. For why? That answers itself; he is one of those who carry hearts after them. I said to him, 'Welcome to Orleans, m'sieu.' 'Thank you,' he answered, just so quiet; and then I saw— But that is not to be told to Gaston who mocks always."

"I do not," denied Gaston hotly. "*Bon Dieu!* I am ashamed for us all, that such folly is in us. For you half believe the legend, Félicie, and so does Adrienne. Superstition, credulity; and Florian Galvez pays!"

Adrienne offered no reply, continuing her way up the short flight of steps to the main house. Félicie waited until the door closed, then turned furiously to her fiancé.

"So, Gaston de Bienville, you talk and talk! Could you not let Adrie alone? Do you not know that when Florian Galvez was seventeen and she was sixteen they were two flowers on one stem? Children, if you will, but Adrie has never married. No, although papa has argued and mama has wept, although she knows they would never give her to a Galvez with the gray eyes. And you talk to her of that!"

"I beg your pardon, gentle one. Nevertheless, you and Adrienne credit the story enough to dread it; I see it in your eyes."

"No."

"Si."

"I do not," interjected André.

Félicie leaned across the fountain, her small piquant face vivid with an idea that swept retort from her mind.

"Gaston, listen; I have a plan to prove Monsieur Florian's courage, to silence this whisper. You love me a little, perhaps?"

Gaston threw away his cigarette and smilingly rose to reassure her concerning this fact.

"No, no, stay over there, Gaston; you distract me. Tonight to our dance most surely will come Monsieur Florian,

with his father and brother; one understands that all these tales run under the surface and never are hinted or admitted aloud. He will come, and you will quarrel with him furiously."

"*Par exemple!*"

"Hush, how can I speak sensibly? You will quarrel, there will be a challenge; Monsieur Florian accepts, comes to the ground, *then* you explain it is all a jest. And all the world sees he is not afraid."

"André, she calls this speaking sensibly."

"It is the wisdom of Monseigneur Solomon. Consider the happiness of Monsieur Florian, of Adrie, of everyone. Oh, it is a great good you do here, my Gaston."

"Félicie—"

"Henri will aid you, and Guy de Roche and Valentin Salcedo. But not a word to anyone else, especially Adrie. What it is to have a fiancé so charming, so clever, so eager to please. Dear Gaston."

"Félicie—"

"Gaston, let me whisper; it was of a falseness, what André said, I adore that mustache so graceful. Now let us sit down and arrange— André, go see that Adrie is not coming."

"She is not," reported the interested André, after a hasty investigation. "She is in her chair by the grille, looking out."

"Ah, the grille," sighed Félicie.

The grille, that arched, deep-set iron grating missing in no Creole house of the old Spanish architecture; the tall gate that was not a gate, since it could not be opened, yet which gave such ready passage to golden words and fancies. Across these straight black bars Gaston had courted Félicie; between them Florian Galvez used to toss his boyish offerings of fruits or flowers, and once thrust a tiny alligator of the bayou, wrapped in Spanish moss from the cypress forests that clasped the city.

Many a drowsy afternoon had Adrienne passed gazing across the grille, as she gazed now; but alone, always

alone. And the most daring young Orléanais had tried in vain to lure her there by moonlight.

The voices of the gay three in the court floated here as a murmur subdued as the hum of the bees in the rose-vines; already lengthening shadows crept from the gray walls. Soon it would be too late; a quiver crossed the face that was rather proud than tender, that long reticence had left almost cold.

She knew it all so well, so very well; the first light step on the flagging, the rustle of the parting bushes, the swift, warm cry—

"Adrienne, *c'est moi*—" said Florian Galvez, and caught the hands she held out to him through the grating.

They looked at each other for a long moment, hungrily, almost fiercely, then he stooped to kiss the slim fingers.

"You have not changed, eyes or heart. Adrienne, you are left me; a morning star has stayed until noon. Oh, how I have loved you all the years!"

"You promised to come when you were twenty-five."

"Adrienne, to come last year would have been to desert one whom all the world failed, to leave in his need the man whom I reverence and love and to whom I owe allegiance. And I heard you were to marry Fernand; you were such a child when I left you, dear."

"They wished it; I refused."

"I never knew; it has been a nightmare year. Adrienne, will you remember tomorrow that last night I believed you Fernand's wife?"

His fugitive expression was so somber, so bitter in its self-reproach, that the girl drew back and her fingers slipped from his.

"What do you mean?" she demanded, her large eyes widening. "What have you done?"

"Nothing; forgive me. What should I have done?" his smile flashed out. "Quarreled with Fernand?"

She regarded him strangely, even searchingly; her glance comprehending every detail of his unconsciously worn elegance of costume, his unmistakably

Parisian ease of bearing, the gentleness of his fine, dark face.

"You never quarreled with Fernand, or anyone," she responded slowly. "Have you forgotten, Florian, what you said to me the day you left?"

His brows tangled, but the clear eyes did not fall from hers.

"I told you that when I returned I would bring an answer to the tradition which declares every gray-eyed man of my house a coward who sooner or later finds disgrace. Well?"

Adrienne laid her hand on the back of the chair.

"What have you brought?" she asked faintly.

Florian Galvez looked away and a great weariness overshadowed his face.

"I have brought grief and failure and outlawry; loss of fortune and loss of friends. I have brought the scattered tinsel-dust of an empire, the sorrow of another's sorrow; and the bit of silver for which I traded my future. But I have brought no disgrace, yet."

"I do not understand—you speak folly."

"I have lived folly, as your world counts. Adrienne, I am parched for a little confidence, a little trust that I am not so different from the rest. I am tired of playing St. George to this toy dragon of superstition."

Her eyes filled with sudden childish tears of disappointment.

"Then why did you come?" she retorted. "Since you believed me married; since you have nothing to tell these people, why did you come?"

"Perhaps because the pleasant city called me to its old tranquil life, perhaps because I wanted to see you if only as Fernand's wife. Come, let us tear Today out of the book and claim it ours. Do you not see that if I had an explanation ever so perfect, to give it now would leave us always different?"

"You mean—?"

"I mean that the days of witchcraft and legend are over, that this is the nineteenth century, the year 1815. Wake, wake; judge me by all you know, not fancy!"

The strong vehemence won, the old fascination seized and held her; Adrienne swayed to the grille and he took her hands again, bending his splendid glowing face against the bars to hers.

"I love you, I waited," she gasped. "Florian, there is a way. The outlaw La Fitte has carried insult too far and tomorrow the governor sends an expedition against Barataria. Go with them; prove you are not afraid."

"Adrienne, tomorrow I will not be in New Orleans."

"Stay and prove it for my sake; prove it to me—to us—to them—"

The stammered corrections only emphasized the slip. Florian drew back abruptly.

"*Proof*, of what? I was wrong; the Adrienne I knew has changed.

"No, no, but—"

"Adrie," called Félicie's high sweet tones. "It is maman who demands you. I come—"

The two gazed at one another, separated by more than the frail grille; by more than when the ocean lay between.

"Tonight, at the dance," Adrienne panted. "Florian, you are cruel."

He saluted her profoundly, his gray eyes a white fire.

"Pardon, only in pain. Tonight, mademoiselle."

"Adrie, to whom are you talking?" laughed Félicie. "I interrupt?"

But Adrienne was alone, her brown head on the arm of her chair.

Four times a year it was the custom of Monsieur and Madame Clairmont to give a dance; two affairs of ceremony to which were invited everyone in the Vieux Carré, two joyous family festivities in which joined all the numerous kinsmen and intimate friends. Of the latter class was the one tonight, and the house bubbled over with gay young cousins.

Gayest of all were Félicie and her fiancé's closest friend, Guy de Roche, whose glances could not meet without sparkling into mischievous intelligence. Gaston himself appeared a shade less indolently languid than usual, and he

betrayed a marked interest in each arriving group.

But in that he was not alone; every time the grinning slaves threw back the doors all eyes went that way, and through the babel of greeting ran the whisper:

"Monsieur Florian Galvez is home. *Dis donc*, he comes tonight?"

"I have spoken to him," gurgled Cécile Daudet, nestling down by Félicie. "On the avenue this afternoon. He did not know me; ten years old I was when his father sent him to France, but I knew him and curtsied my prettiest. Listen, Félicie; he is superb, adorable. Those fatal gray eyes are of a beauty! Do you think—do you believe that story?"

"No," declared Félicie the bold.

"Then I will not. How lovely is Adrie in that white dress. Look, look, they are coming."

But it was only Monsieur Galvez and his eldest son who entered—the disappointed room heard a murmur of "later," in response to Madame Clairmont's inquiry. The first notes of the violin and harp tinkled out, down the gleaming floor the first couple moved to take their places.

"Là, là, là," sang little André, resplendent in white linen and a huge scarlet tie. "Là, là, là; Gaston, Félicie is waiting, of what do you dream tonight? Of that mustache *si gentille*?"

Gayer and gayer grew the merriment, more and more in demand were the iced glasses of orangeade or *eau sucrée* borne around between each dance by Monsieur Clairmont's fat black slaves. The occasion being informal, the elders of the party had organized tables of *bizet*.

Near ten o'clock someone came unnoticed through the folding doors and paused to survey the scene. Down the centre of the room swayed Cécile, poppy-red her silken gown, poppy-bright her cheeks and lips, one hand in that of Guy de Roche; from the other end came rosy Félicie and Gaston, between the two couples Adrienne poised opposite Fernand Galvez. Only An-

dré had time to see and hurl himself across the room.

"M'sieu Florian; là, là, là!"

Florian raised his eyebrows warningly, but it was too late; everyone present turned that way. Félicie and Cécile alike missed a step as their wide eyes flashed in that direction.

It was an ordeal sufficiently disconcerting, but Florian Galvez met it without a change of color. Composed he stooped to return André's greeting, then unhurriedly made his way to Madame Clairmont.

"I could have adored that man," reproached Gaston in his companion's small ear. "You make us enemies—"

"Patàtà, he will be of a gratitude!"

"More likely he will force the duel through and leave me a bullet-hole, Mademoiselle Bellona."

"Then I will nurse you, *cher* Gaston."

Adrienne went slowly to her seat when the dance ended. She was vaguely aware of her parents' punctilious care of their guest; the presentations, the recall of former acquaintances, and that Florian received it all with a grace where Parisian and Creole blended. But she recognized also the keen curiosity and interest of the others, the chilling coldness of Monsieur Galvez's glance as it rested on his younger son; recognized it all with bitter resentment both for and against Florian.

The music recommenced; Adrienne was already engaged and saw Florian go to pretty Cécile. Three more dances came and passed before he crossed to her.

"After the next dance I must go," he said, gazing down at her. "Will you grant it to me, mademoiselle?"

She motioned him to the seat beside her.

"You go like that?" she demanded passionately. "Then you mean to tell me nothing; you have nothing to tell? Florian, I wish you had stayed in France."

"So do I, mademoiselle. I have asked too much."

The level gray eyes were very sad, the quiet face not free from a bitterness

matching hers. Adrienne's small fingers closed on her fan.

"You knew what they called you, what a Galvez with the gray eyes must fight, yet you return with nothing. Failure, outlawry, you said; you have come back to these. You want me to dance with you? Good, I will, but afterward—"

"I am to go?"

She turned away her head and the magnolia in her hair brushed his forehead.

"I loved you, Florian Galvez."

"I wanted a gift," he answered deliberately. "If I must purchase, barter deed for deed—"

"My dance, mademoiselle," interrupted Gaston's drawling tone beside them.

"Pardon, monsieur," corrected Florian, "mademoiselle has conceded me that honor."

"I claim it by older right, Monsieur Galvez."

"Mademoiselle's last decree holds, I think."

"I think not."

The two young men regarded each other, Gaston rigid from utter distaste of his rôle, Florian rather superciliously astonished.

"We will leave the decision to mademoiselle, Monsieur de Bienville," he suggested courteously.

Gaston shot a vicious glance at the amused Guy de Roche, who had strolled up.

"I do not remember," Adrienne faltered, confused and bewildered.

What happened was so unexpected, so swiftly over, that no one except the two chief actors ever quite understood. Gaston's movement forward, his rapid phrase, Florian's rising from his chair, were lost in the crash and ring of shattered glass as one of the suddenly halted slaves opposite them let fall his huge tray.

The musicians stopped, dancers and card-players turned, aghast.

"Madame, we are desolated," explained Gaston clearly. "It is the obstinacy of Monsieur Galvez which has caused this destruction."

"That was an unfortunate word, monsieur," retorted Florian.

"I will explain it at dawn, then," he answered significantly.

The room was too stupefied by the audacity of the proceeding to interpose.

"At dawn I will not be here," Florian said, pale with anger.

"Then now, by moonlight."

It was a duel, a crime by the law of the State, that was being proposed before them, an outrage on Monsieur Clairmont's hospitality; but no one present saw more than the long delayed answer to the problem of a Galvez with the gray eyes, the test of a tradition.

"I cannot," said Florian, in the absolute hush.

"Cannot?" echoed Gaston, stunned.

"No."

"When you return—"

"I shall not return."

The refusal was final and unexcused; a shivering sigh ran through the room. Gaston flung out his hand almost imploringly, conscience-stricken at his own work.

"You can account," he cried. "You have a reason? Ah, it was a jest—it was not serious, messieurs—"

But no one of those he faced believed him and Florian himself swept the pretext aside.

"It was no jest, Monsieur de Bienville, and your challenge is a pleasure I must deny myself."

They looked at one another across the litter of broken glass, which at least to Gaston's excited fancy typified the glittering fragments of the other's life. Adrienne lay white and giddy in her chair, her lashes lying on her cheeks. It was Félicie who broke the pause.

"Gaston, tell them! Monsieur Florian, it was a game, a silly trick!"

Florian turned to her, but before he could speak his father rose from the card-table.

"You asked today that I wait for proof," he exclaimed, his voice unsteadied by passion. "You have given it tonight to me and all New Orleans. There are two of my name, Fernand and I. Go, and come back no more. There is no place for you here."

"It is a mistake, a mistake," cried Félicie desperately.

No one heeded her. Florian Galvez surveyed the breathless circle, then brought his eyes back to the old man facing him across the room and bowed to him profoundly, hand on heart.

"There is no place here I shall ask," he answered, with something very near indifference. "And I will not come back, monsieur."

As he reached the door André rose to clasp him in an impetuous embrace.

"It is not true," he wailed fiercely. "M'sieu Florian, you are not afraid—you are not. I want you!"

Cécile broke into hysterical tears and ran to Félicie. Florian caught the boy in his arms.

"So I have one friend in Orleans? André *de mon cœur*, I leave you all the world has left me; keep my toy until you understand. And not even a Galvez with the gray eyes can stain you thus."

He kissed the boy on both cheeks, then put him gently away and went out.

Gaston de Bienville overtook the other on the wide steps.

"Galvez," he exclaimed hotly, "*nom de Dieu*, you a coward! I ask your pardon—"

Florian turned on the stair to look up at him.

"And I give it so little that I would buy the right to kill you with anything, everything, except the next hours. Go back; we Galvezes are not facile—"

Gaston obeyed.

"Monsieur Clairmont, and madame," Monsieur Galvez was saying stiffly, "for this scene I apologize from my heart. Shall not your charming entertainment proceed?"

Mechanically the music recommenced; already the slaves had removed the broken glass, and a very much shaken set of dancers moved to their positions. Guy de Roche was fanning Adrienne and affecting to observe nothing unusual in her pallor.

"André," questioned Gaston softly, "what did Monsieur Florian give you?"

"A little silver cross," choked André, fighting for self-control. "Let me alone, Gaston de Bienville; it is mine."

"Do not scold me," pleaded Félicie, as her fiancé came up. "Gaston, I am wretched enough. But who could have guessed the story was true?"

"André was right," he responded irrelevantly, "your Florian Galvez has the *bel air*."

To the fine French tact of all, there was but one thing to be done: to hurry out of sight the disgraceful scandal as had already been done with the shattered glass and china, to ignore the late scene. Gray of face, Monsieur Galvez had seated himself and picked up the cards. Adrienne was rising graciously to dance with Guy de Roche, since Gaston did not claim his victory. Cécile shook out her poppy skirt, and the tide of gaiety rolled over the wreckage, burying it in bright froth.

Eleven o'clock had struck as Florian left; by twelve the ball had reached the old height, its merriment never so dashed with excitement. At one Félicie's mandolin rippled out across the gardens as she commenced the impromptu concert that always concluded these evenings.

"Le chemin que tu m'as montré,
ma bien aimée,
Mon cœur la suive toujours—"

she sang in her fresh young voice, and, listening, young lovers and old exchanged demure smiles, while Madame Clairmont slipped her hand in her husband's under the table.

The outer doors slammed sharply, the ring of spurred heels on the steps mingled with the excited tones of the slaves and the stamping of a horse in the street beyond.

"Open the curtains," commanded an imperious voice. "This way? I want to see these people—"

The man who appeared on the threshold wore a glittering and unfamiliar uniform of white and silver that alone would have halted the universal attention, his great height being accentuated by a helmet over which towered the imperial silver wings of a departed

greatness. Gauntleted, his cavalry saber swinging in its place, the effect might have verged on the theatric but for his keen, resolute face and the fact that behind him stood the captain of the ship just arrived from France.

"You are the people of whom I was told?" he asked. "No, do not rise, I am not a guest; I only want to see you."

The tone could not have been more bitterly contemptuous, the scrutiny more cold, but no one moved.

"I wanted to see you, and to explain a little, a very little, of all I think tonight. You do not know me? I am Etienne L'Estrange, companion-at-arms and lieutenant to Colonel Florian Galvez of the late White Hussars of His Imperial Majesty the Emperor of France."

Something like a sob of wonder escaped the hearers; Félicie's mandolin fell ringing to the floor.

"He did not send me; do not imagine it. I come because somewhere out in your accursed bayous he will die tonight, and I choose you shall hear why now, as all your city will hear tomorrow. Last week, mesdames and messieurs, the third in our friendship fell into the grasp of that pirate La Fitte who has his stronghold on Barataria, at your gates. Twenty-four years old is Marcel de Laurent, and sentenced by La Fitte to be shot at dawn unless a certain concession reached the island first. The details concern you not at all. Now do you understand? Our ship arrived at New Orleans this morning, tonight Colonel Galvez has gone alone to Barataria. *Alone*; you call yourselves heroes who venture there on an armed expedition, a hundred strong. He has gone to buy de Laurent's life with his own. For you know the first dip of an oar will bring the fire of La Fitte's men; you know La Fitte. He expected and arranged for that. The toy duel to which you invited him—" his blazing eyes swept the room. "Oh, I have heard the story—a Galvez with the gray eyes—he told it to me the night before Waterloo. And the next day the Emperor paused in that hell to pin his own cross on Florian Galvez's

breast. We triumphed the hundred days with Napoleon; we loved and lived and fell with him. When it was over, when Europe held no peace for us, we came here. I—" he broke off, setting his teeth in his lip. "Last evening Florian told me that today, his last, he would pass among his people. I congratulate you, mesdames and messieurs, upon the day you gave."

That day! What crowding recollections held the white-faced party still.

"We did not know," cried Félicie blindly. "Monsieur, we did not know!"

L'Estrange bowed to her ceremoniously.

"Mademoiselle, you did not know what? That Colonel Galvez was not a coward? Oh, we brought grief with us, who left our Emperor a prisoner and found our loyalty a crime, but not disgrace."

Adrienne's head sank to the arm of her chair before the familiar words, all the magnolia petals falling from her hair and drifting across the polished floor.

"I leave you; I pray pardon for having disturbed you so long. If I have bored you, remember in excuse that I have put on this uniform for the last time to give the last salute to my chief, who dies tonight in his civilian dress alone among your swamps. Mademoiselle there faints, I think."

All turned to Adrienne; the man in the doorway swung on his heel and went out.

In the confusion that followed, André gravely crossed the room and laid Florian's gift before Monsieur Galvez—the tiny silver cross and scarlet ribbon of an officer of the Legion of Honor.

Before morning the story was all over the city, and New Orleans touched such heights of enthusiasm as only the South can attain. French to the core, still resentful of the Anglo-Saxon domination, all sympathy was already with the fallen Napoleon and his officers. And Florian's disregard of the dreaded La Fitte added the final heroism.

In the Clairmont house it was Félicie who cried all day, heart-broken at her share in the affair. Adrienne was very quiet; there was nothing more to wait for, but nevertheless she had the sense of waiting. In the moonlight she had gone to the grille, the night past, and touched her lips to the bar he had touched in bending his head to hers; she thought perhaps he might pass that way and know.

And then, late that afternoon, a slim rowboat shot up the river, and through the city raced the news that Florian Galvez had come back.

Gaston was in the courtyard with Félicie, Adrienne gazing unseeingly at the splashing fountain, when Monsieur Galvez entered unannounced.

"La Fitte has sent Florian back," he stated, his dry voice rigidly controlled. "He declares he is not engaged in murder of those unafraid. Florian has gone to his ship, wounded; and in an hour the captain sails for New York. Mademoiselle Adrienne, will you come help me keep him here?"

The others cried out in wonder and joy; Adrienne rose without a word and put her trembling hand on the old man's arm.

"I have a carriage," he explained briefly.

"Gaston!" implored Félicie. "Gaston—"

He caught her hand and they hurried after.

It was sunset when they reached the deck of the *Reine Hortense*; sky and water quivered palest blue all flowered over with rose and gold, coming relief lightened the melancholy, rhythmic chant of the slaves at work on the wharves among the cotton-bales.

So quickly had the news traveled that scarcely half-an-hour had passed since the arrival of La Fitte's messengers and not yet had Florian's nurses dared move him from the first improvised couch. On the open deck the two parties met again.

It was not the Florian of the day before who lay among the cushions and rugs, his head resting on L'Estrange's arm, nor yet the visionary and unreal

Florian of the white and silver eagle-wings. Almost repellent aloofness stamped the composure with which he surveyed his visitors, a not gentle mastery of the situation. Through Gaston's mind flashed the phrase of the night before: "We Galvezes are not facile—"

But Adrienne was beyond fear or embarrassment; she took a step forward, with her earnest gaze on the worn, colorless face.

"Florian," she said, "I do not know that you care to see me now; I know how I have failed. But I love you; if you want me I will go where you go. I stay here with you now."

She had found the one road. He held out his uninjured left hand.

"Come," he answered tenderly and gravely. "I had no right to test you more than you me. Come, my wife."

She slipped down by the couch and her fingers clung to his.

"Florian," his father began, "you will come home."

"No," answered Florian Galvez, his voice the slip of steel on steel.

"If I ask you—"

"No."

"If I apologize—"

"It is not fitting that you should apologize to me, monsieur; I have not asked it."

They looked at each other; perhaps it was the first time in all the years that Monsieur Galvez had ever really looked into those clear gray eyes.

"If I want you, if I have been mistaken, will you come?" he asked, with a tenacity of purpose no less than the other's.

Florian wearily moved his cheek against the sleeve of his friend, the gesture a caress.

"I thank you, monsieur; we have all been mistaken. I go with Etienne to meet Marcel, and my wife goes with me."

"Adrie, Adrie!" sobbed Félicie.

Gaston crossed impulsively to the couch.

"And our duel?" he questioned, between laughter and earnestness. "Monsieur Galvez, you must remain in

New Orleans if only to kill me; you promised yourself that. Come, admit this is home; can our pleasant city, our drowsy days, our friendship, call you no longer?"

Slowly Florian's smile responded to the other's, then his eyes went wistfully to the city that lay in the sunset glow.

"Etienne—" he murmured.

Gaston held out his slim hand above the couch.

"Monsieur L'Estrange will perhaps honor me by being my guest. You will need a second in that duel."

A breath of evening wind brought across the water perfumed hints of magnolia and orange-blossoms, spiced with the heavy cypress fragrance. High and shrill a boy's voice hailed the ship from an approaching skiff.

"M'sieu Florian is there? M'sieu Florian comes home? It is André Clairmont who asks—"

"After all, I asked too much," yielded Florian Galvez, overborne; and drawing Adrienne closer he lifted to his father the old, quietly sweet gray eyes.



NEXT DOOR

By Charles Hanson Towne

WE saw the tapers burn
 In the home so close to ours;
 But however our hearts might yearn,
 We dared not send our flowers.
 "He will not understand," we said,
 "Our loving thought of his loved dead."

O City! Thus you hide
 The pity in every heart!
 Those who are at our side
 You sunder a world apart.
 A little barrier built of stone—
 And my neighbor grieves—alone, alone



FAR FROM IT

WILLIAMSON—I thought that Bixby was going to retire gracefully from politics. I see he has joined the prohibitionists.
 HENDERSON—Well, don't you call that retiring from politics?
 "Ye-es, but not gracefully."

CLAUDIA

By George Sylvester Viereck

HOTEL WOODCLIFF, July 30.

MY DEAR WALTER:

"The rain it raineth every day," as some old nursery rhyme used to run when I was a child. It really does, though. Everything is dripping—the trees, the eaves of the house, the skirts of the Summer girls if they venture outside for a moment. An immense ennui broods over the place—or at least over me. It may do me good. I am developing a monstrous capacity for laziness. After all the strain of the last few months, it is pleasant and restful to drift for awhile.

When it stops raining—which it does occasionally—I go out and stretch myself at full length under an old beech-tree and dream. The old dreams, of course, are dead and buried. When a fellow has reached the mature age of twenty-two and a quarter, he ought to be old enough to have settled the principles on which he means to live his life. Oh, I know your opinion of the young men of today—it isn't an especially flattering one. But the fact is they are remarkably like those of yesterday; and those of tomorrow will not be so very different. Human nature is always the same, and the exuberant spirits of youth are bound to find expression in one way or another that displeases Philistine wisecracs.

So much for the past. As to the present, it's no use talking about writing anything here. You surely can't expect that even I should turn out a masterpiece every day. I am simply plunging into the cool green depths of Nature, watching the life that swarms all around me, and getting

into the most utter harmony with my environment. The acorn is my brother, the caterpillar my cousin; and I shouldn't be at all surprised to find myself turning into a tree-frog.

But now it is time for my mid-morning nap. Don't try to rouse me from my divine laziness for a few days, there's a good fellow. After that I may be in shape to begin creative work again, and to think of new romances.

Always your affectionate

ROLAND.

II

NEW YORK, August 1.

MY DEAR LAD:

You are perfectly right. Plunge as deep as you like into the cool green depths of nature. I believe in my heart that the very best thing you could do would be to go and be a cowboy for a few months. But city life has spoiled you—you wouldn't stand it more than three days. If I know you, the next thing I shall hear will be that you are over head and ears in love, in spite of the wisdom of twenty-two and a quarter. It can't be for anything else that you've been lying fallow a whole month; and it would be eminently characteristic.

When you have discovered a new affinity, you will probably let me know. If you take my advice, you will fall in love with a dark beauty, preferably between thirty and forty—the more mature the better. She will put you through a regular schooling in the art of love. That sort, of course, has a distinct educational value for very young men.

You needn't be anxious—the mature beauty will not fail to make her appearance. I feel a pricking in my thumbs. When she turns up—*She*, I mean—don't forget

Your
WALTER.

III

HOTEL WOODCLIFF, August 3.

MY DEAR WALTER:

This time you turn out to be a poor prophet. I haven't seen a woman here who strikes me as being adapted to fill the vacant throne of my heart. There are a certain number of so-called human beings here; but if you ask me what they're like, the best I can say is that they're like everybody else—types, not real people.

The most amusing were a couple of chorus-girls who strayed in here, I don't know how. Both were impertinently blond, although the exact shade seemed to change from time to time. Nice little girls all the same, in a way. But the virtuous matrons of the place gazed upon them with alarm (especially those who had husbands here), and threatened to leave. So the poor things had to move on. They migrated to the other hotel, only a stone's throw from this. Within a few days half the bachelors had moved over too; but the married men remained gloomily constant—especially one who, as he told me, had been under the yoke for eighteen years. I saw him yesterday afternoon, quietly stealing over in the direction of the other house, looking very mournful. But I respected his sorrow and did not let him know that I had seen him.

My own heart has been well fortified since Rose's dethronement. I do not think I shall ever love again. No, I mean that—you may laugh if you like, but you will be wrong. Love isn't a trifling ailment with me. Now with you, of course—ah, what wouldn't I give for your temperament, or your pose, or that indefinable smile of yours? No woman can stand against

it. It says so much, and yet so little; it entices, for it mystifies.

You haven't heard anything lately from your wife? You know you've never said very much to me on that subject; but I can't help feeling that you must have suffered terribly through her. And yet I can't understand how it is possible to turn indifferently away from a person to whom one has given everything. I couldn't pass Rose even now without blanching or flushing. I should like to have known your wife, though. A woman who could induce you to give her your name must have had extraordinary charms—or extraordinary histrionic ability!

Write soon and relieve a little of the tedium of my life here. I have exhausted all my topics of conversation with the sparrows and the woodchucks; and you surely cannot expect me to strike up a friendship with the commonplace creatures in the house. By the way, I heard an amusing thing the other day. One of the men here bought my book. After he had read it he said contemptuously to the bookseller, who told me about it, "The fellow who wrote that must be what they call a superman!"

Well, good-bye for today.

Always yours,

ROLAND, Superman.

IV

NEW YORK, August 6.

MY DEAR SUPERMAN!

Here in the office everything is still. The others are gone and I am quite alone. No, not quite, for there's a little mouse gnawing in the corner—gnawing at my heart, perhaps, or my conscience, because I didn't write to you yesterday.

You make a mistake, I think, in despising the people around you as mere types. There are no such things; there is not a man or a woman who is quite beyond the possibility of affording me some amusement—at least as much as the flies and gnats that buzz around

me. And when you happen on a specimen that is more than commonly interesting, you should run a pin through him and put him on a card, to study at your leisure. This, however, is a lesson that you will only learn with years—by the time that you have learned the lesson of cheerful negation.

No, I am not a *poseur*, my dear boy. What is *pose*? A consciously-assumed attitude that finally becomes second nature. If you put a baby in my charge from its birth, I will undertake to make anything you please out of it—a genius or a criminal if you choose, and with equal facility a good-natured, commonplace Tom, Dick or Harry; and I may say, by the way, that these last are much the pleasantest to get along with, besides having, first and last, more influence on the development of the world than your kind, the supermen. But education makes us what we are; and great natures educate themselves. They learn first of all to be silent, because otherwise they know they will end in being crucified or burned at the stake by the rest. And this is what the world calls *pose*—but is it? You will have to come to it some day—but of course at two-and-twenty . . .

No, I have had no news of my wife. You know we are not divorced; she has obstinately refused to agree to anything more than a separation. I never see her. Once a month I write her a cheque, which is forwarded to her by my banker. Now and then, when the spirit moves her, I get a dramatic little note from her, telling me how happy she is.

You have picked out, with remarkable insight, the right word to apply to her. She was an accomplished actress. She played her part so cleverly that she deceived even me. To be sure, in those days I was nearly as young as you are now—and fully as innocent. When I came to understand her I woke up to the fact that there was absolutely nothing beneath the surface; and then, of course, there was an end to her power over me. But at the outset she

wore the mask with surprising skill. We seemed so well suited to each other. She guessed my thoughts before I spoke; she shared all my views, my weaknesses, my idiosyncrasies. But suddenly one day, after we were married, a suspicion awoke in me. I gave utterance to some views which were really utterly repugnant to me—and she expressed her entire agreement with them! I tried the same experiment in other subjects, and always with the same result. Soon I came to realize that every move she made was the result of calculation. Each slightest gesture was studied. The whole thing was acting—not art, but artifice.

She had a certain amount of native cleverness, but of any deeper intelligence not a trace. And when I became aware of her constant effort to represent herself as something different from what she was—not better, but simply different—the thing got on my nerves. I conceived an absolute disgust for her. I know those days were hard on her too—if we had gone on living together, one or the other would have ended in a madhouse. Both the ties that had seemed to bind us together were broken at once—that of the senses with that of the mind; and so separation was the only thing. I could not endure to be chained all my days to a dead ideal; life meant too much to me for that.

It is since then that I have learned the lesson of silence. I have given up trying to find a kindred spirit to understand me, for I realize that no one can enter into another's life, not even his dearest friend's, without being misunderstood. And when you set a peal of bells chiming together, the slightest discord is a pain.

But all this you will understand better when you are much older and wiser. Meantime be a good boy, and take care of yourself, and write me without reserve everything that comes into your heart.

Truly your friend,

WALTER.

V

HOTEL WOODCLIFF, August 8.

MY DEAR OLD WALTER:

Ever so many thanks for your good letter. You always give me something to think about. But I have great news for you! Your prophecy has been fulfilled after all—I am in love!

She is tall and beautiful—dark, with plenty of fire, and, I think, the subtle *finesse* which my complex nature demands.

I see you smile once more. But the fact is, when I first looked at her my heart simply gave a leap; something seemed to come up in my throat and choke. I couldn't take my eyes off her face. When I cast stolen glances at her across the dinner-table, I saw *her* eyes—oh, such eyes . . . the depths and whirlpools in them . . . a sea of flame!—I saw her eyes resting on my face. At least I fancied they were; I don't think I can have been mistaken. And then when she saw I was looking at her there was no foolish blush, but a smile crept round the corners of her adorable mouth. I got as red as a schoolboy caught looking over another's shoulder in an examination and tried helplessly to conceal my embarrassment behind a dish of fruit. I can't help fancying, absurd as it seems, that she . . .

There, I can't write any more. My heart is bounding as uncontrollably as a young colt in a pasture. Bless you, old fellow!

ROLAND.

VI

NEW YORK, August 10.

MY DEAR BOY:

I was not at all surprised to hear that your heart was cutting capers—forgive the unpoetical expression. But you start off at a speed! So far, I imagine you are more in love with love than with the lady herself, and it is great fun attempting to depict your sensations.

You don't say anything about the fair charmer's age—but I dare say I can guess it. When I was a boy I was more than once madly in love with that sort. There's a charm, of course—subtle *finesse* to which nobody but you can do justice . . . it's very pleasing to one's vanity.

You may make your mind easy—she *was* smiling at you. Lovely women of the Balzac age generally have a soft spot in their hearts for fair-haired boys. Well, good luck to you—go on and conquer!

WALTER.

VII

HOTEL WOODCLIFF, August 13.

MY DEAR WALTER:

You are quite wrong; it is not vanity on my part, nor *raffinement* on hers, that draws me to her. This time it goes much deeper than that. She affects me like an artistic ideal. I love her as one loves a poem that puts into words the rapturously beautiful thoughts for which one has sought the right expression in vain. Her hair is like night, entrancing night; her eyes have the deep glow of the pit of hell; her mouth is a streak of vivid scarlet in her face; her whole body . . . Ah, you are smiling again!

Sometimes a shy little hope springs up in my heart; but I say "Hush, hush!" to it, like a mother quieting a restless child. My lovely enchantress is a woman who knows every hue in the chromatic scale of love. What have I to offer her? If you were in my place, now, with that look of yours, the look of a man who sees through everything and can smile at it all with languid contempt, it would be different.

Yet I can't help thinking she likes to look at me. She— But I see her crimson silk parasol sending a ray of vivid color through the trees of the garden. At this moment she is fastening a rose in her perfumed hair. She is looking this way. Good-bye until tomorrow or whenever I have time to write again.

Please, please don't be so cynical, if you want me still to be fond of you!

ROLAND.

VIII

NEW YORK, August 15.

MY DEAR POET-BOY:

I should be very sorry if this thing were to go too deep—which I still permit myself to doubt. You poets always think, if the love-god's arrow has grazed your skin, that it has gone clean through the heart.

Well, don't worry about your fate. Before this letter reaches you, you will have had a blushing avowal from her, or I am very much mistaken—and you know I never am. But I'm fearfully busy today. When you're off in a cool green spot, with nothing to do but to lie around and flirt, it's easy enough for you to forget that the curse of labor still weighs upon your friends at home. So no more this time. Good luck!

WALTER.

IX

HOTEL WOODCLIFF, August 18.

MY DEAR WALTER:

Your last letter was simply horrid, and I've a great mind not to answer it. But I must talk to someone about her. She is as beautiful as she is unfortunate. She has had bitter experiences in her life, most of all in her marriage. Luckily for her, she is a widow now. She must have had a brute of a husband. It is quite plain that he never took the slightest part in her soul-life. When she tried to come closer to him he repulsed her with cold contempt—in short, he treated her as a pretty puppet with no other mission in life than to dance to the piping of her lord and master. He had only scorn for her lofty views of marriage, of the mutual help of man and wife. And so it came about that her love and her pride crept away into a little corner of her heart to languish and die. He attracted her at the outset because he knew how to surround

himself with a certain exotic atmosphere that clung like a delicate perfume to everything he touched. But she was not allowed to enter even the ante-chamber of his heart; this glorious woman was forced to stand outside and beg for love!

How she must have suffered! Is there anything more bitter than to bring another your holiest feelings, your whole soul, and have him push it away contemptuously like a distasteful dish offered by a servant at the table? It seems incredible to me that any man could have ill-treated such a woman, instead of putting his whole life at her feet in reverent worship.

When I am near her my blood is at fever-heat. I long to offer her my heart, which in spite of all I have known is still young and virgin. I long to seize her fragrant hands and kiss away the marks of his cruelty.

ROLAND.

X

NEW YORK, August 20.

MY DEAR BOY:

Here is my prescription. A cold bath every morning, and evening, too, would do no harm. A teaspoonful of cold water every ten minutes. Reading of novels to be entirely avoided.

Always yours,

WALTER.

XI

HOTEL WOODCLIFF, August 24.

MY DEAR WALTER:

There is no use talking. I am happy, and nothing you can say will make me change my mind. I read once of a poet who sought all his life long for the princess that was to redeem him from sorrow. In the years of his wanderings his footsteps grew wearier and wearier; the roses faded from his cheeks and the gold from his hair. But his heart was undismayed. Somewhere in the world, he was sure, lived the princess whom he was seeking; she longed and watched

for his coming, although she had never seen him and might perhaps never find him.

There's a truth in the story. For each one of us there is a redemption, whether we need release from the galling fetters of the small persistent worries of life or from the bonds of delirious dreams. Whether or not we find it lies upon the knees of the gods.

But I have found mine. I remember writing to you once with great pride—how long ago it seems!—that I was twenty-two years and three months old. You asked me teasingly if I had not slipped in an extra month. Today I modify my statement: I am just a week old. I never lived before I knew her, before the miraculous princess came and smiled at me to tell me that my deliverance was at hand.

When we meet in public we exchange stolen glances that no one sees. I do not speak a word, but I know she understands what I want to say. When I pass her in the doorway I put out my hand quietly and touch the silk of her dress; its soft rustling sound goes through me like the music of an eolian harp breathed upon by invisible angels. When we are alone I sit at her feet and lay my head in her lap, and she tells me what she has suffered. And as her bright mouth gleams before my eyes I have to put force on myself not to kiss it, not to take her in my arms, not to forget everything . . . Good God! And I thought I had loved before and was done with loving—that I had lived through all there was in life!

Ah, Walter, there is a love that you do not know, that in spite of your wisdom and your smile of superiority you do not understand. I don't know whose fault it is; but I realize now that this is why you are not understood. Make the experiment; try speaking your whole heart out for once. *She* would understand you. There are more fine, sensitive natures in the world than you think. Put what I say to the proof—unveil your soul utterly, and be happy as I am happy.

Your
ROLAND.

XII

NEW YORK, August 25.

MY DEAR BOY:

Thank you for your letter. I have something to tell you, though, that will hurt you—that may cut deep into your heart.

When I was answering your last letter a suspicion had already crept into my mind, about which I said nothing, for fear of rudely breaking the enchantment of your Summer day. But I took means to inform myself; and now that I find what I feared is true, I cannot keep silence any longer, for your sake as well as for mine.

No one would be happier than I if you had really found your dream-princess. But it is not so. The woman who has fascinated you, at whose feet you long to lay your young life, is totally unworthy of your love. Even if the circumstances were other than they are, she would still disappoint you grievously in the end. You would leave the best part of your life in her merciless claws when you finally tore yourself away.

In a word, you would be in worse case than I was—for I have found peace, though God knows after what struggles.

She has played her part with consummate skill; she has made herself interesting, fascinated you, holds you captive. And all this she has done not out of any special malice toward you; it is merely the histrionic impulse which she is incapable of resisting. She would be a charming woman (you see I can be just) if she could ever be herself, if she could show herself in her own true form—as a beautiful average woman, full of imagination, quite capable of making a man happy who should not expect too much of her. It is unkind, though, of a fairy god-mother to lay in a child's cradle a well-meant but imperfect gift, to present it with imagination without the power of controlling that faculty. That is the trouble with her. She is the plaything of her moods. A little more,

and she might have been an artist; as it is, she has merely the temperament of the artist. She can soar to a certain height; but then her powers fail her, and she drops back into the deception which is second nature to her. It is just such women who bring misery to all whom they touch, by promising what they are unable to perform, awakening hopes which they are bound to disappoint.

Fortunately it is in my power to save you from being too hopelessly entangled by this siren. I will not have you dashed to pieces on the rocks of the commonplace. You told me what a brute her husband must have been. Well, you may judge for yourself: I am that brute. She has simply lied to you—played a part, as usual. She told you she was a widow; she is my wife.

There is only one thing for you to do. Do it.

WALTER.

XIII

HOTEL WOODCLIFF, August 26.

MY DEAR WALTER:

I will ask you to read this letter for the sake of the old-time love. The news it brings ought to be welcome to you. If you choose, you can now break the last bond between us. I am willing to agree to a divorce. I will go further still: I beg you to apply for one.

It would be no use trying to hide the truth from your penetrating eyes—so here it is. I love Roland, love him madly! My heart is set on marrying him, on being to him at once wife and mother—everything. For his love I will gladly walk barefoot through the world, removing from his path the sharp stones that might hurt *his* feet.

Oh, I know now I could never have satisfied you; but I will make him happy. That is all I ask—not that I shall be happy. And when you see what great love can do, it should take away some of the ground of your quarrel with life. You see I know that you are not happy now.

You owe it to me to set me free; you owe it equally to him. You tossed me away from you like a fruit from which you had taken all the savor. Is it possible that you will rob us both of our happiness? He says there is none anywhere for him outside of my arms, no bliss except in the sweetness of my mouth. I understand him; he knows how to read the depths of my heart; he does not, like you, wrap himself in a cloak of mystery.

You do not love me, you see; it will be no real sacrifice for you to give me up. You have nothing to lose, everything to gain, for it is in your power to make two people happy. God himself could do no more than that!

I am a proud woman, and it is hard for me to ask anything of you. It is hard for me to humble myself before one whom I once loved and worshiped. But—once more, Walter, I beg you to set me free.

Then I shall be your eternally grateful,

CLAUDIA.

XIV

HOTEL WOODCLIFF, August 26.

WALTER:

I have a sacrifice to ask of your friendship for me. I love your wife madly, and she returns my love in an equal measure. I should never come to you for what I am seeking now if you had not separated from her, and if I did not know how hopelessly you misunderstand her.

I am sure your nature is great enough to pardon a woman who is indifferent to you for loving another. You know what she is to me. She will be the inspiration of my song. If I lose her now, my lyre will be forever dumb.

She is the ideal of all my artistic dreams. All my manhood hungers for her. I can be perfectly frank with you. Now is your chance to show that you can really understand all that is human, that you are really the man for whom I have always taken you.

I shall look for a telegram to say that you are rising to the height of your opportunity—that you are willing to right the wrong you have done Claudia, and make me happy forever.

ROLAND.

XV

NEW YORK, August 27.

MY DEAR CLAUDIA:

You are mistaken if you think I shall give a young life up to your insatiate desires. On my side, I do *not* agree to a divorce. Not even letters constructed with remarkable melodramatic skill will move me from this conclusion. I think you know me and will understand when I say that this is my last word.

Do you want that boy to waste his youth at your side? When he is thirty you will be fifty; but long before that the intoxication of the senses will have taken flight. You will be nothing but a depressing weight, which he will vainly try to shake off.

My decision is better for you, too. He has not a penny of his own; and you are used to luxury. You are too old for love in a cottage to have any charm for you. In case you insist on clinging to him, my banker has instructions to withhold your remittances until you are under my roof again. If, on the other hand, you should find a more suitable mate, I will not in that case oppose a divorce.

You may rest assured that I wish you well, and if there is anything within the bounds of possibility that I can do for your service, I shall be glad to do it.

Very truly yours,

WALTER.

XVI

HOTEL WOODCLIFF, August 28.

You were right, Walter. Curses on all women—on all faith—on every-

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thing in the world, but most of all on the dreams that lie to us!

She has gone. She has left me—with a banker. The very waiters shrug their shoulders when her name is mentioned.

As for me . . . Well, I mean to bury myself in my work—or perhaps I may go to Africa. Anything to get away from here! Ah, it didn't take me very long to understand your smile—to understand everything and to despise everything. My heart is bleeding—who shall heal the wound?

In deepest gratitude, your

ROLAND.

XVII

SOME years had gone by. The two friends sat quietly smoking and chatting together.

"Yes," said Walter, "her husband writes me that she died quite suddenly at the last."

"I can hardly realize it," said the younger man. "It seems incredible that I shall never see her again. . . . She was everything to me once, and now she is gone. Of course, since I have understood some things better, I have felt very differently about it all. And yet . . . to think that the grave should close on the fair body I used to love, worms crawl on the lips that could deceive me with such dreamy sweetness—that the heart is still forever which once beat for me . . . and betrayed me for a few pieces of silver!"

Walter was silent. The servant came in with a sealed letter and gave it to Roland. He opened it and saw that it was from a lawyer. He did not take time to read it, but with fingers that trembled a little he tore open the enclosure. Well he knew the handwriting of the address.

"What is it?" said Walter, startled by his sudden pallor.

"A message from the dead!"

The letter fell from his hand. Walter picked it up; and this is what he read:

MY OWN DARLING BOY!

As I stand on the brink of the grave, one thing torments me. I do not want you to think ill of me when I am gone.

I *did* love you truly—and just because I loved you, I made the greatest sacrifice for you that a woman can make: I deceived—I renounced you.

I saw plainly that the Midsummer night's dream of our love would end for you before long; I could not bear to think of being a stumbling-block in your path. So I left you.

Yes, I know I left you with a rich man. But tell me, dearest, would the sacrifice have been any greater if I had gone from you on weary feet, with a beggar's staff? I would not be dependent any longer on Walter. My divorce and subsequent remarriage are familiar to you.

Believe me, for many a long day and many a long night I thought of you—and cried for you. I have followed every step in your development, and rejoiced when I found anything in the papers about you.

It was fated that our love should end as a dream ends. You were to remember, dear, what a beautiful dream it was, and forget the awakening. But I am not willing to go to the long dream from which there is no awakening without letting you see all the truth of me for once.

So I tell you once more that I left you because I loved you. Don't believe anyone who tells you anything but that. One does not go to death with a lie on one's lips.

Soon I shall be standing before the judgment seat of One who is greater and more

merciful than love. By the time you read these lines, dear boy, I shall know my sentence.

Farewell! In the last sad hour a smile will hover about my lips that no one will understand but you and me—and the merciful God. Walter had my Spring, but the wonderful glow of the Summer was for you. You will always remember me as I was in those days of sunshine.

CLAUDIA.

Walter read the letter through to the end, his voice growing harder and harder. Then he tossed the sheets away from him. "Even on the edge of the grave she could not leave off her acting! She could not die without thinking whether her pose was becoming. The real reason . . . I . . . but there, what's the use—?" He left this sentence unfinished, as the younger man stooped to pick up the scattered sheets.

There was a long silence. Then Roland broke it, speaking in a strange voice, as though the words were wrung from him: "I wonder if it really was acting, after all!"

But the grave had no answer to give and the man at his side said nothing.



AT THE TOMB OF VIRGIL

By Aloysius Coll

TIME rests on old Posilipo. The sun,
O'er-heavy with the garland of his beams,
Like a great nymph has plunged into the gleams
Of his own purple bath—the day is done.
On Nesis' brow a lonely gull has spun
A thread of silver, weaving into dreams
The sacrifice of Portia. Nature schemes
Where Tragedy and Romance were begun.

Virgil is dead—if tombs can speak of death
For one that, passing, lives forevermore
In song as hushless as the moving deep.
Vesuvius hears him still in Capri's breath,
And like a child, adrowse with mother-lore,
Pillows her head in stars, and falls asleep!

THE ROOM AT THE TOP

By Austin Adams

“FOOT it—and then tell me I lie!” Thick under-lip stuck out, shoulders shrugged up till they touched his flabby jowl, and thumbs thrust dogmatically into the leathern girdle about his paunch, the fat host of the inn at Hunay backed up with a proverb, Croatian fashion, his statement that it was all of nine long leagues from the goose-common at Grubb to the fortress atop of Buda. “Foot it, my fine fellow, foot it—and then tell me I lie!”

Yaszai glanced up at the beast of prey knowingly, as who should say: “Do you take me, Stanislaus Yaszai, for a fool?” and went on counting out the coppers to pay for his breakfast. This done, he swept with a crooked palm the goodly little pile of gulden and florins into the gaping mouth of his goat-skin purse, and shook his head when the landlord’s wife stopped the clatter of dish-washing long enough to protest that nobody with a crown in his pocket was safe afoot on the road just now.

“Nor with a crown on his head either!” grunted mine host, bred to the most conservative of trades, “for behind every hedge in the land lurk your hungry and desperate plotters. Best take the chaise, my young friend—it’s nine leagues, I tell you!”

“God abide here!” muttered Yaszai, shaking himself free of the greasy paw and doffing his cap to the wife as he hurried out into the morning air. Of course the man lied. No Croatian but lies to one whom God loved enough to make him a Hungarian; it’s the nature of the beast. And laugh! how the fellow did reek—garlic, vile wine of

Adriatic, rancid oil pressed from olives flung out for the scavenger to sweep out of the kennel—now that one’s nose got a whiff of this delicious dew-washed morning air! Also, the thrifty porker had got a glimpse of the gold among his fistful of silver and copper; and he had a rickety chaise and pair for hire. Nine leagues, eh? Nine leagues would take one to the end of the world—and Buda-Pesth was but the centre of the world, Stanislaus Yaszai was no fool. Then, too, he was a free man, at last, and had that in his pocket would spell fame and fortune directly he got the ear of the world. All day he trudged on, toeing into the free, full future, the past slipping away from his spurning heels.

Lies or no lies, it was near sundown before he dropped upon the steps of the Matyas church on the fortress-crowned crest of Buda, to rest and to gape wide-eyed at the city. His little legs were sore. His big head ached. He was hungry and, with night coming on, homesick. Nine leagues, did that ball of fat say it was? Nine! As for him, Stanislaus Yaszai, he had traveled far that day, crossed the abyss. Who is to say how far it was from submission and denial to revolt and conquest, from Grubb, where one was “that dreamer, ‘Slaus,” gammer Yaszai the cheese-monger’s ne’er-do-well youngest, to Buda-Pesth, where genius has but to show its face to be proclaimed from the housetops and received at court? There was Ignace Kubenyi, from the very next village to Grubb, with his fiddle, to prove it!

Sunset. Mother would be milking the goats, or, the milking done, potter-

ing among the curds in the cheese-shed at the back of the garden. Presently she would begin to worry because "that dreamer" came not home to supper; nightfall would find her frantic over the little bed, empty tonight for the first time in all his twenty-and-two long years. Well! Let the little plaster Virgin over the chimney-piece prove, for once, that she could do more than smile down upon the flesh-and-blood mother who had prayed to her every night and morning since she first learned the prayers that only one mother can pray to another. If the nonsense Father Gabrilowicz preached of a Sunday was not, after all, nothing but nonsense, here was heaven's chance to pour forth the promised comfort.

Twilight! Mother would miss him. Poor old mother! If she had only found something else to say of his dreams than "Fiddlesticks!" She would miss him, die of a broken heart, maybe. But if one's own mother think's one's salvation depends upon one's becoming as good a cheese-monger as the Yaszai breed, father and son, have been ever since a king's hunting-party—seeking shelter in a shower—nibbled a bit of Yaszai curd, in the year 1789—

So this was the great world—at last! He looked down over Buda and Pesth, an endless expanse of roofs and spires and far-flung avenues, magnificent, solid, the empire of genius, gleaming now gold and purple in the slanting light from the west, the Danube, a waving ribbon of pale-blue haze, curving between them—and the Thing in his pocket beat against his heart. Yet was the vision quite vague, as a saint sees heaven. Not a landmark down there signified; no detail was known to him. It was the world. His eye roved aimless from sight to sight; he saw nothing except the bent form of an old woman pottering among the curds in the cheese-shed at the back of the garden far away at Grubb. Under not one of these myriad roofs beat a heart in which he had a place; not one of these million people knew

him. Not one? Yes, there was 'Telka Goudrassy. She would remember—first love, they say, leaves a scar—but she was married now to one Bokcz, a cobbler living in Istvanter utza, wherever that street might be. 'Telka used to cry when he read his verses to her. Heigh-ho! but genius, descending unheralded upon the world, is as naked as a new-born babe, and announces its advent with a cry.

Hunger came to the rescue. Out of his knapsack Yaszai took the red handkerchief in which he had tied up his food for the journey. It smelt of home, cheesy; but as he bit into a slender crescent the last thick slice of black bread he laughed away the last tendrils of homesickness that still twisted themselves about his heart. He got up, kicked the kink out of his cramped legs, whisked the cheese crumbs out of the handkerchief and started down the hill on a run. It was nothing to him that at his right he passed the king's palace, at his left the prime minister's, nor that the majestic bridge which he crossed led to the Parliament house and the seats of the mighty. Night was falling—he must find, if it took him half the night long, the home of the cobbler, Bokcz, in the Istvanter utza, where 'Telka would jump up and cry, "God be with you, 'Slaus!"

"The room at the top." Frau Beckmesser looked not up from the gray woolen stocking which she was knitting—stolid cattle, these Germans, thought Yaszai—when the loutish porter, with a stubble of pig's bristles for hair and screwed-up little colorless pig's eyes, stuck his head through the wicket of her lair, at the side of the tunnel-like entrance, and grunted that here was a student requiring a room.

"The room at the top," said Frau Beckmesser once more; "and see that he pays down a week's rent, two florins, before you give him the key. I know these students—rogues, all of them!"

They passed on into the courtyard and Yaszai followed the wheezing and cursing porter as he climbed the zig-

zagging stone stairs to the fifth landing. There he opened a door at the foot of a narrow flight of steps, steep and dark, which creaked as they went up. At the top, under the rafters, the porter showed the new tenant into a large room and, having received the week's rent, left him to inspect his quarters. The house was one of a score of dingy buildings off Sandor utza, where is the Nemzeti Museum. Etelka Goudrassy had given him a pallet on the floor of Manó Bokcz's cobbler's shop for the night, but said she: "A great scholar like you, 'Slaus, must not think of living anywhere but near the Nemzeti Museum; about here live only driven brutes like Bokcz." Poor little 'Telka! She was grown pinched and gaunt and the roses had faded from her cheeks.

Yaszai looked about him. The room was a garret lighted only by a skylight. The plaster had fallen from the wall in many places. A low bed stood in the corner, with a tumble of dirty bed-clothes upon it; there was a deal table and a broken chair; and a rusty stove propped up on bricks by the huge chimney which rose like a church pillar in the middle of the room. An artist had lived here, evidently, for the patches of plaster still on the walls were covered with sketches. At the farther end, moreover, hung a curtain of heavy tapestry, now patched and full of rents and stains, but once costly enough. Yaszai went over and felt of it, and as he lifted it he saw that it hid a doorway—into what? The space beyond was mirk and smelt of dust and dead air. It could not be a closet, for the slant-sided opening seemed to extend indefinitely in either direction. Dropping the curtain, he went and threw himself on the bed. He did not like that doorless opening; it might lead to other rooms—inhabited by whom?

He was still trying to laugh himself out of his foolish fears when he glanced over at the curtain and was sure that he saw it move. He sat up and was on the point of demanding who was there, when a long bony hand showed at the edge of the curtain, and as it was drawn aside he beheld an old man standing

in the shadow and peering in at him. His face was all nose, for the sharp little black eyes were buried beneath a monster bush of eyebrows and the mouth hid by the big mustache which mingled with the long white beard. He wore an old red dressing-gown which flapped loose about his skeleton of a body and showed his skinny bare ankles below. The feet, knotted over with purple veins, were thrust into carpet slippers which dropped at the heel as he shuffled into the room. The great dome head was quite bald and glistened like polished marble; it was a wonder that the odd little green velvet fez could keep from slipping off. The apparition stood staring and bowing as he held aside the curtain.

"Who are you?" sang out Yaszai, getting to his feet and not knowing whether to be amused or frightened.

"What the world wishes to know," replied the old man, stroking his beard and cocking his head quizzically, "is who and what *you* are. As for me, what matters it who goes out at the back door? It is he who knocks at the front who signifies. But as we are to be neighbors you may know me as Joko—unless you like to call me The Man Who Stayed On Top."

Thought Yaszai: "But this is a madman!"

Joko hopped up on the table, where he sat on his heels, his chin resting on his sharp knees and his beard wagging comically as he tilted his head from side to side. He seemed to be carving away the young man's flesh with his keen eyes, to get at his soul. Yaszai winced under the thrusts and turns of the two-edged knife.

"Where's your fiddle?" asked Joko suddenly.

"I'm no musician!" retorted Yaszai, a bit piqued.

"Where's your palette, then, and your mahl-stick?"

"I don't paint!"

"But you're a genius, of course?"

"Yes," said Stanislaus Yaszai, so naïvely that Joko had to clutch the sides of the table to keep from falling, he laughed so.

Presently, however, he was grave again and sat rubbing his shins as he eyed the youngster.

"A genius, eh?" murmured Joko as if to himself; then aloud: "You've heard of the room at the top, I suppose, where there is plenty of room?"

"This is it, isn't it?" responded Yaszai innocently; and Joko hugged his knees for very joy. Thought he: "But this is an unweaned babel!"

"Yes, this is it," said the old man, "how do you like it?"

"It's wretched enough, isn't it?" replied Yaszai, looking about the bare room.

"What!" cried Joko, swinging around and dangling his legs over the edge of the table. "Wretched, say you? It's at the top! From the window up yonder one sees but the sky by day and the stars by night. And at the end of the passage one may crawl out upon the leads and looks down—down, mark you!—*down* upon the little world swarming with maggot men—to say nothing of having plenty of room, for everywhere below one has to rub elbows with Tom, Dick and Harry, who sweat and shut out the light from one."

Not at all knowing what the old man was talking about, Yaszai said nothing.

"Genius, eh?" went on Joko after a little. "A poet?"

"The same," answered Yaszai, fumbling in his blouse for the roll of manuscript.

"Read me the play later," said Joko, his little eyes dancing with delight. "Do you see that face up there?—on that patch of plaster just above the bed?—yes, that one. Well, walk through every gallery in Europe and you'll have to come back without seeing anything so beautiful, so divine, so—so—just look at that face. will you!"

"Who painted it?" asked Yaszai, going and standing in front of the sketch.

"Who painted it, you ask? Who could have painted it but Mihaly Horowitz? Yes, poor Horowitz also climbed to the room at the top, just as you have done, when he ran away from *his* home in Bragda-Dobra."

"Before he conquered the world?" mused Yaszai, still gazing at the miracle face.

"No; before he found the room at the top wretched," retorted Joko, clapping his hands and riveting the boy with his eye. "It's the same old story. He sold his soul, Horowitz did, for the smirk of fools and a purse full of jingling gulden!"

"Would you have had him stop up here painting only unfinished things on the plaster, where nobody can see what one does?"

"Nobody?" asked Joko scornfully. "Am I nobody? Are you nobody? No. I would have a man whom heaven has inspired to paint such a face as *that*," the old man stood up and bared his head before the face, "paint nothing less glorious—no, not if he had to eat the rats in this garret while the world down there grunts and sweats in the mire of its brutish stupidity!"

Thought Yaszai: "But the fellow is quite mad!"

"They're all the same, these geniuses," grumbled on Joko, resuming his perch on the table. "To them a career hangs upside down; it starts at the top, up here where one may hear the rustle of angels' wings and breathe deep the free air of inspiration; it ends in the quagmire of success, where jostling jealousies and bribed rewards and fawning favoritism choke the soul while they fill the belly. Horowitz lives now in a castle overlooking the Danube, drinks tokay at ten florins the flask, pins a new decoration on his coat every time that hired critics applaud a portrait of a pug-nosed arch-duchess—and daubs acres of canvas at so much the acre; he, he, he who painted *this*!"

Once more the green velvet fez was doffed; once more the old bald head was bowed in sorrowful worship.

"They're all the same," he went on. "There was Ignace Kubenyi, now—"

"You knew him?" broke in Yaszai eagerly.

"I knew him—the world never will know him! This was his room when he scoured beer-barrels at twelve crowns a week, and played to me and the stars—"

God! how he played. Now he goes to America every year or two and comes back as rich as a fool—drunk with the praise of critics who take his monkey tricks at harmonics and double-stops for art. Here he used to play Bach and Beethoven; in the glare of the concert-halls he does only the gimcracks of Paganini! He laughs in his sleeve at the idiots who pay five thousand crowns a night, no matter what he fiddles nor how. He's lost, is Ignace Kubenyi, lost; he admits it himself."

"But I shall never descend from my art!" protested Yaszai, his head thrown back, his narrow shoulders squared like a general's.

Joko shrugged, shut his eyes for a moment and then let the smile die out of them.

"A poet? How shall you escape the damnation of despair?" muttered the old man after a long silence, during which Yaszai ran his eye over the pages of his manuscript. When Joko spoke, at last, the boy started and looked up with a hot flush on his face.

"What mean you?" he asked, confronting Joko.

"I mean," answered the old man slowly, "that if you have written anything true the world will have none of it! I mean that if you have dreamed in your native village that the publishers and critics have eyes and ears for art—but, then, why waste advice?"

"But this play—Father Gabrilowicz himself declared it was as great as Sophocles—has but to be read by the Herr Intendant of the opera, to be accepted and performed. The next morning I shall be famous. The teachers at the gymnasium at Grubb, no less than Father Gabrilowicz and Etelka Goudrassy, who was educated by the Visitation nuns at Vienna, all proclaim it great!"

Joko roared. Then, sobering instantly, he leaned forward and placed a kind hand on the lad's shoulders. When he spoke, it was with tenderness which terrified Yaszai far more than had his scorn.

"Hear me! The Herr Intendant will toss your play into his trash-basket with-

out breaking the envelope; or, if by accident he should actually read it, he will break your heart by delay. In the meantime your money will be spent; you will make friends among the ten thousand other geniuses who are taking revenge on Fortune by going to the devil as fast as wine and women and gambling can send them; you will taste of the delirium of revolt and clasp the hands of other rebels, calling them comrade; and—fatal expedient of the drowning genius!—you will write clever nothings which the *Budapesti Naplo* and other rags will print, filling your gnawing belly, the while—and away goes your art! Oh, I know, I know, I, Joko Sourhada, The Man Who Stayed On Top—and starved! But here, let's have a look at the masterpiece of the genius of Grubb!"

As Yaszai paced the floor and declaimed the lines of scene after scene, Joko, with closed eyes, listened with growing wonder. By the end he was sobbing.

"Cut off your hand, little brother," he said, kissing the boy's brow, "before you smear it with the ooze of success! While one still lives, one must always descend, descend, I say, to get a hearing."

Long they talked then and every night thereafter for weeks, when Yaszai climbed to the room at the top after his wonder-revealing excursions about the city. The old man watched the swift changes and sudden explosions which each new day brought about in the young man's soul, noting them sorrowfully. The young man too was aware of the inrush of ever new universes, noting them defiantly, triumphantly, like a giant rejoicing to run his race. But no word came from the Herr Intendant of the opera; and the little store of coins in the goatskin purse ran steadily away.

"Look at that one—the one with the haunches of an ox and the hairy arms of a gladiator," said 'Slaus Yaszai, pointing at one of the women who were carrying heavy hods full of mortar and bricks up a ladder to the top of a new building.

"Yes," sighed 'Telka Goudrassy Bokcz, "they work, these poor women, nine hours a day, for less than a florin. They are mothers—do you wonder that we know what we know about the days of blood that must soon down?"

"Mothers?" murmured Yaszai. "With breasts as flat and as leathery as rawhide! Have they no husbands or sons, that they must needs be turned into beasts of burden? God abide with us! but I'll help pile high the barricades on the day of days!"

Etelka patted him joyously on the shoulder; the poem which she would have him pen was the *Epic of the Dawn*.

"Comrade!" she murmured as his cold nervous hand shut tight over hers.

They had been much together, 'Slaus and 'Telka, in these last few weeks, daring the drunken jealousy of cobbler Bokcz by meeting among the pleasant shades of Varosliget, where, sitting on a secluded bench, they talked of the innocent old childhood's days and the storm-racked days of the lowering future, and watched the idle and sullen people hanging curiously about the Os-Budavara and the Beketow Circus. Full of deep thoughts was Stanislaus Yaszai during these long walks with 'Telka Goudrassy, deep thoughts and bitter. The mask of life had been suddenly snatched away—and he beheld upon its face a grimace of hopeless agony. Where bands played popular airs and the sleek bourgeoisie went through the motions of merrymaking it was worse than in the hovels of horror in the alleys off Dob utza and Istvanter and Petöfi. Thought Yaszai: "Nero fiddling while Rome burns, or civilization turned harlot and dancing with Death on the trampled faces of women and children!" Why, he asked himself, why would not these proud priests, lifting their cassocks above the mire of suffering, these grand ladies sweeping by in their splendid carriages; these fat shop-keepers rubbing their itching palms at their shop doors; these strutting officers, servile clerks, profit-calculating merchants, grave bankers; all these who bulked so large as "the bulwarks of society,"—why would they not see what he, Stanislaus

Yaszai, saw, and hear what he heard, day after day under the open sky and night after night in the smoke-fouled halls where desperate comrades told one another that Justice would come to her own tomorrow?

Already, as he lay tossing upon his bed in the room at the top, Yaszai was fashioning the new tragedy, not, like the first play, a reflection of the accepted, but wrought of the stuff of life now in the making. This drama would open the eyes of these blind ones—and, mayhap, send himself to the gibbet!

"And you hear nothing yet from the Herr Intendant?" asked Etelka. "It must be all of two months now."

"Not a word—but speak not of that matter, I pray you, 'Telka. I care not what becomes of that innocent puling. It is of yourself, little one, that I would hear. Bokcz? He is—"

"Bokcz is a beast!" she cried, grasping Yaszai's hand, which he pulled away guiltily. With all the rest in the surge of the larger life had come to him of late the wild desires of his manhood suddenly free of the leash of the old conventional conscience. "He's a brute, I tell you! When he's drunk he beats me—I could show you the black and blue welts on my back—and when he's sober it's worse, for then he—he—ugh!—he loves me! 'Slaus, any one of these nights I may come to you—you will take me?"

"Come not!" muttered 'Slaus, shuddering; Joko had told him many things about women. "Come, let us go over to Margit island; one forgets there."

But 'Telka would not go; Bokcz would miss her, she declared, and suspect something. So they walked slowly back through the city, Yaszai's mind filled with the many things that old Joko had told him about women. He had told him, human old Joko had, about the Little Sisters of Shame. Not that 'Slaus had need to be told of them, for they were everywhere about the city; but his soul would none of them. They had dark rings about their lack-luster eyes; their wooden faces were painted; they offered not their souls with their bodies. He had talked

to one. She had met him on the bridge at three o'clock one morning. She was very young. She was one, she said, of three hundred farmed out by old Kahnweiler, the usurer, to whom they had to give over their pitiful wages. She had earned nothing; she would be beaten and starved; so Yaszai gave her his last eight-gulden piece. But she flung it back at him and before he could stop her she had flung herself into the river. No; the Little Sisters troubled him not, save that the sight of one of them lurking behind the shadow at the corner brought back into his ears the hideous scream of that drowning child. But 'Telka—? She must not come to him; that was certain!

That very night she came. Bokcz had driven her out on the streets at midnight. Where else could she go than to 'Slaus? So they lived together, Stanislaus Yaszai and 'Telka Goudrassy, in the room at the top, thinking no evil. All their talk had been of the coming time; already they lived, at heart, in the New World, where they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the free whose God is the Nature the Christian's God made. And old Joko looked on the while, saying nothing. Joko and the stars that showed through the skylight looked on and said nothing. Also, Joko thanked the stars for the little hands that stirred a mess of hot gruel for him every morning. 'Telka's gruel stuck to one's ribs.

It was all one to old Frau Beckmesser, the wife of the janitor, whether the lodgers received their letters today or this day week or never. A pretty crew of cut-throats, these students, with their "Down with Everything!" nonsense over their beer and their scandalous willingness to let landlords whistle for their rent! Letters for such indeed! If they expected her to bother her head about their letters they were much mistaken. Let them come and get them!

So it chanced that when, a month or two later, the postman thrust a big blue

official-looking letter through the wicket and sang out that it was for one Yaszai and bore the seal of somebody or other in the royal service, Frau Beckmesser merely jabbed her knitting-needles the faster into the gray woolen stocking of that morning; and the letter fell upon the little mountain of letters and newspapers on the floor. It is there still, as far as Frau Beckmesser knows or cares.

"For one Yaszai, eh?" said Frau Beckmesser to herself. "That is the name of the little manikin with the great sad eyes sunk in his enormous death's head, who starves up under the roof along with mad Joko. I know, for the wench who lives with him told me so. She looks a decent child—but God abide with us! how she does rave about what she calls 'the Cause'! That tongue of hers will hang her yet!"

Meanwhile, in the office of the Herr Intendant, no less than three great personages awaited the unknown genius, whom the letter summoned to an instant audience. The three were: the Herr Intendant himself, the Herr Censor Librorum, and—unparalleled honor—the Herr Oberhofbuchmeister, come all the way from Vienna with word that His Imperial Majesty had graciously condescended to be pleased with the new play and had deigned to order it performed forthwith.

"A rare genius indeed," said the Herr Censor, a near-sighted little old man, who, if he could have his way, would burn every book in Nemzeti library not dedicated to the House of Hapsburg, which had kept him in office for half-a-century, "a rare genius for these days, this Stanislaus Yaszai, since he has produced a masterpiece without suggesting the overthrow of society!"

He passed his snuff-box to the Herr Intendant and the Herr Oberhofbuchmeister.

"And he is evidently nothing but a youth, country-bred and provincial," remarked the Herr Oberhofbuchmeister. "Fancy what he will write after his fame has opened to him the portals of the great world!"

"In the meantime," grumbled the Her Intendant, a fidgety dyspeptic accustomed to seeing the stage puppets jump directly he pulled the wires, "I wish that our genius were more prompt. I commanded him to be here at ten; it is already ten minutes past!"

"Make allowances for the artistic temperament," chuckled the Herr Oberhofbuchmeister. "Or—who knows but the poor devil has starved? I myself know that it took me seven weeks to get His Majesty to listen to my reading of the play; and Heaven alone knows how long you kept the manuscript pigeon-holed before thinking it worth your while to glance at it."

"Starve!" sneered the Herr Intendant. "Starve, in Buda-Pesth, in times like these? Why, man, not a night passes but the rabble devour the entire contents of some bake-shop, or guzzle every drop in some vintner's cellar. Burgomeister von Schniff tells me that there are no less than sixty thousand unemployed men in the city; that a general strike is about to paralyze everything; and that the police and soldiers are not to be depended upon! Anyhow, our new poet is not of the tribe of the wolf; his work shows this."

"He is a Magyar, however," replied the Herr Censor, himself German to the roots of his thin, yellow hair, "and there is tiger blood in every Magyar, and a tiger is a playful kitten only so long as his belly is full. I do wish that there was not so close an affinity between genius and revolution!"

"We shall see what we shall see," murmured the Herr Oberhofbuchmeister.

But that day they saw nothing of Stanislaus Yaszai, nor the next nor the next. With fame and fortune and no less than three officials of the crown waiting for him, Stanislaus Yaszai roamed aimless about the city with 'Telka Goudrassy and began to raise his passionate young voice in the nightly gatherings of hunger-maddened men, not unobserved by the secret police. As for old Joko, he went daily to sell his trinkets to the soldiers at the barracks, and declared he was actually growing

fat on the gruel which 'Telka stirred for him every morning.

Two, four, six, eight—twelve in all. Yaszai counted the corpses as they laid them side by side on the pavement before the house the police had attacked. Three of the dead were women, one of these a girl of ten whose head had been cleft to the chin by a saber stroke. From his perilous perch on the sign above the door of a shop Yaszai looked on, and the tiger in his Magyar blood was lashed into fury. His eyes lost their gleam of defiant faith in himself and in humanity; in its place glowed the look of patient determination which he had seen, with not a little disgust, in the eyes of old Joko and other old men who had waited long for the Dawn. Yaszai scrambled down from his perch and mingled with the quickly swelling crowd.

It was already the fourth day of the general strike. For four whole days and nights nobody in all Buda-Pesth had done the bidding of his master, save only they who buried the dead and nursed the sick. For the rest, such as wished to eat must cook for themselves; who would travel about the city must walk, since no one would drive for them nor run the electrical works; all work had stopped; and respectable people generally had been obliged to perform all sorts of mean duties. At night the town lay in total darkness. Aristocracy rubbed its eyes and had perforce to soil its hands if it wanted to enjoy life. Even my lady had to lace her own boots and hook up her own bodice. The common people had gone mad, it seemed. Here was a pretty state of affairs indeed! And all just because men demanded the empty right to vote and to have a say in running the Government. It was even rumored that the Army was secretly in sympathy with the proletariat, and when orders were given, officers never knew if they would be obeyed. So the police had been commanded to drive the people out of their houses to work. At the first house—a teeming rookery at the top of Petöfi utza, where dwelt many

men from the electrical works—they had killed twelve; but not a man had gone back to work.

Yaszai elbowed his way to the corner. There the crowd was immense and men stretched their necks and women hung out of windows to learn the cause of the roar which came nearer and nearer from the next street. Presently it was passed from lip to lip that the soldiers were coming. "Barricades!" Just how, no one could see; but before the mob surging ahead of the troops had reached the corner, the head of Petöfi utza was choked with anything and everything which could be used in throwing up the barricades. Men carried furniture and barrels and stoves and doors and shutters, while women stuffed mattresses and pillows through the windows. The little children helped.

While staggering under the weight of a chest of drawers which he was helping a hunchback to carry out of a shop, Yaszai heard 'Telka Goudrassy call him. She was leaning on the arm of old Joko; they had been looking everywhere for 'Slaus all the morning. The three of them stepped back out of the sweating and struggling crowd and stood in the entrance to one of the houses. Joko clutched tight the staff of a big red flag. The old man had slept not at all for nearly three days; he had gone from one group of men to another, haranguing, inspiring, shaming them into taking a final stand.

"They are bringing their soldiers—the St. Joshafat regiment, made up of husky Magyar lads, sons of the starving—and we shall see sights directly!" chuckled the old man.

As he spoke, the people scurried like rats from before the troops, leaving an open space in front of the barricades. Flag in hand, and the muscles of his gaunt frame taut, Joko climbed to the top of the pile, followed closely by Yaszai and Etelka. The mob sent up a mighty cheer as they beheld the three. A young officer sang out to them to come down or he would command his men to fire.

"Dogs!" shouted Joko, addressing the soldiers. "will ye shoot down your

brothers? Fling down your arms—or, better yet, turn them upon those who make butchers of you while they make slaves of your people!"

"It is Joko Sourhada!" yelled a burly sergeant, throwing his rifle upon the pavement. Others in the front rank followed his example; and the guns were eagerly snatched up by the people. The young officer, his face aflame, but his eye on glory, drew his revolver and fired. Yaszai caught Etelka as she toppled forward on her face, a thin stream of red trickling from a spot in her forehead. Joko was waving his flag and it was his cracked voice, they say, which struck up the "Marseillaise." The battle-song of the people rose presently from thousands of lips. Yaszai heard nothing, not even the spitting fire of the rifles which men in the crowd were beginning to discharge against the soldiers. He was trying to drag the body of the dead girl back of the barricade. Once more the young officer fired, sitting unmoved on his horse while his men turned and fled. This time it was Stanislaus Yaszai who fell. A red-hot skewer, it seemed, had been thrust into him between the shoulders.

"'Telka!"

By the side of the cot on which Yaszai lay getting well, his mother knelt, fingering her rosary and watching the boy's face and nothing else, although no less a personage than the Herr Intendant himself and two other gentlemen had, at last, managed to find their way to the poet's squalid room. Himself Joko had hastened to Grubb to fetch Yaszai's mother after, in the confusion of the riot, a few comrades had helped the old man to carry him home. Joko now looked out in silence from a corner of the garret.

"Telka, I say!" muttered Yaszai, tossing about.

"He talks in his sleep constantly," explained his mother, "and always it is of one Etelka Goudrassy that he speaks. They were children together—little lovers, as we used to call them,

but he has never seen her since she left our village to be married."

Thought old Joko: "If heaven will but take the word of every man's mother—and why should it not?—hell will have as few men in it as a church has!"

Then Yaszai opened his eyes and stared at the grave gentlemen standing at the foot of his bed.

"God abide with you, Master Stanislaus Yaszai," exclaimed the Herr Intendant, smiling and leaning over with his hand held out. "I bring you rare good news. His Majesty himself has read your play; his commands are that it be produced immediately after Easter—and a full pardon, of course, for yourself and your old friend here—for the little affair of the barricade. Ha, ha!"

Yaszai turned on his bed and caught sight of Joko. The old man was holding up the roll of manuscript which the Herr Intendant had laid on the table and which Yaszai instantly recognized. Joko was making signals of some sort behind the back of the visitors.

"The noble gentleman spoke to you, 'Slaus," upbraided his mother, shaking Yaszai's shoulder gently.

"And the Cause, Joko Sourhado?" asked Yaszai.

"Is won," sang out Joko, causing the three great men to start and turn to look at him. "Two hundred thousand comrades besieged the Parliament House—need I tell you, Stanislaus Yaszai, that the king's puppets shook in their boots, or that the king commanded that our brave starvelings be given a vote? Ho! ho! but two hundred thousand hungry wolves made a pretty pack!"

The Herr Intendant went livid.

"And the soldiers?" asked Yaszai, ignoring his mother's little jabs and shakes; "they who threw down their arms?"

"Oh, they are in heaven: shot like dogs—for refusing to shoot their brothers," laughed Joko, renewing his signals when the visitors turned their

backs. "But this is a merry world, eh, comrade?"

Finally, the Herr Intendant, purple and fuming, repeated what he said about the king's gracious approval of the play; and this time Yaszai listened. All the time, however, he was watching Joko, who now held up the manuscript and pointed to the stove. Stanislaus Yaszai nodded—and the next moment Joko had stuffed the play into the stove and set a match to it. As the paper ignited and a thin curl of blue smoke rose through the cracks in the stove-pipe, the old man waved his long arms above his head in a transport of joy.

"Tell the king, your master," muttered Yaszai, "that Stanislaus Yaszai has written 'The Dawn'—a play that will not be performed until men are free, and tyrants and imbeciles no longer rule a race of lickspittle toadies like you! As for my first play—see! yonder it goes up in smoke!"

"Are you mad, 'Slaus?" shrieked his mother as the Herr Intendant, too furious for words, dashed out of the door, shaking his clenched fist at Joko Sourhada as he passed him.

It being a double execution and one intended to strike terror into the sullen people, they made an extra large scaffold and set it up in the square outside the fortress. Joko Sourhada and Stanislaus Yaszai both shook their heads when the hangman asked them if they wished to address the multitude.

"Little brother," murmured Joko through the black cap which they pulled over his face.

"I am here beside you," replied Stanislaus Yaszai.

"Little brother," went on Joko, groping with his hand until it touched the shoulder of the boy, "said I not truly that there is plenty of room at the top?"

"I see Christ here with us," answered Yaszai, "and a goodly company besides."

"Of those whose art was—" Before he could say whatever he wished to say he was dancing on the air.

LALLABY: A DOUBT

By John J. a'Becket

I SHALL never fix him clearly in my mind now. For me he will always exist as a Doubt. And how perfunctorily I had rated him, at first, as of that portentous multitude who are born to eat and die: Horace's *Nos numerus sumus et fruges consumere nati*. Merely something to be ignored; too dully harmless to merit the mild contumely of being dubbed "amiable."

Yet very early Lallaby's nullity assumed individuality to the extent of irritating me; as a high-strung man is irked by one who leisurely blocks his progress. Not much later he loomed as this obsessing Doubt that I may not dispel. Odd! that one who floated into my ken as medium-sized, fleshed to plumpness, passive in his limitations, and "ordinary" in his differentiation, should ever come to weigh upon my soul as a taxing, amorphous burden!

Lallaby rubs me the wrong way so contradictorily. He is of a finicky neatness. I abhor a sloven. Yet Lallaby's bourgeois tidiness subtly antagonized me more than if he were careless in his dress. His cheap linen is always painfully clean, his "made" black neck-scarf with a hideous "diamond" geometrically placed in it is unsoiled, his shiny black clothes show not a speck to blur their well-brushed luster. His fine, pale hair, unalterably the same, suggests a wig—the white parting just *there*, the downward sweep toward the right temple just *so*, and a knife-like edge where it is arrested, as stable as if it were painted on. Item: white pearl sleeve-links, thin-soled shoes, well polished, and gray socks. His clean-shaven face was round, with high cheek bones, a small tilted nose,

slightly flaring nostrils, benign mouth and soft, expressionless gray eyes, steady, but with no alertness. Singularly commonplace as it reads, there was something in it that would not let it be ignored.

Lallaby as an isolated unit worried me negatively. In his domestic environment (naturally, being so unimportant, he was married and had offspring), his potency in this direction was quite positive. As his spouse and progeny are simply negative, they have no value except as adjuncts of Lallaby; though, at a later stage, when he was raised to the *nth* of Mystery, they heavily underscored him as a Doubt. Mrs. Lallaby has liberally achieved the washed-out blondness to which she was predetermined from birth. She exhibits a long, tired visage, a thin, prominent nose, a ridiculously small mouth—hardly more than a loose pucker, pale, tired blue eyes (the large kind that look as if they might roll out of their sockets) and a meager chest sunk between her thin shoulders. The two girls, anemic duodecimo editions of their mamma, are at the most trying stage of limbs and mental development.

That all this is weariness, if not a grievance, is of course; but the moral note of Lallaby and his is what rubs me most exasperatingly. Content with my lot is not my dominant note. It is Lallaby's, who has not enough of the good "things" of life to content a child, and yet has to support this feminine household. Support them! They buoy him up, exhilarate him. Complacency in his consort almost ruffles the little man's condensed com-

posture. Trotting along by his lady's side, with the proud mien of a Black Spanish cock, he seems swept from his wonted lowliness so far as to be meditating a jubilant cluck over the treasure that is all his: a pæan of ebullient content. When he says "Mrs. Lallaby's," one's hand moves toward his hat. It is like a temporary withdrawal into the sanctuary. O Shade of Horace! *Odi vulgus profanum et arceo*.

Of a pleasant Sunday it is Lallaby's wont to convey his lean wife and sprangling girls to the Park, there to simmer besottedly in the *joie de vivre* of the Springtide and the—*grand monde*! One would fancy that he conceived both these stimulants as devices intended to make a gala day for his family! To a mind of normally healthy hatred of the rich with their insolence of material superiority to the masses written all over them, Lallaby's standpoint is repulsively outrageous. In view of the subsequent Mystery stage of the sleek man, the Anarchistic revel over down-thrown plutocrats which is brewing, should have had charm for him, as it does for less abject souls who hope to be "in" on that event.

But there he will sit, bolt upright on the hard Park bench, his soft, white, characterless hands gently clasped over his plump front, his mild eyes swimming in a dreamy glow as some tub-like dowager in a fluffy confection of the rue de la Paix floats by to the clank of brass chains and the sharp quadrupedal click of thoroughbreds' hoofs. His lips part lickerishly over the ravishing spectacle, as if he were a pudgy "dope" fiend.

Lowly events in the home circle affect him almost as deeply by their play on the more sensitive nerves of husband and of sire. I have had the melancholy privilege of viewing Lallaby seethed in this domestic atmosphere. The little missies' achievements at school, and when they shuffle awkwardly about "helping mahma" in the horrid details of cramped domestic life, stir the shallows of the thistle-

down head of the family to microscopic billows of rapture.

Children may be regarded, philosophically, as quasi-necessary evils, but they are as fatiguing as millionaires. Their fatuous insistence on trifles, endless demands for the mitigation of nascent wants, and insensate craving for admiration engender in sane adults some lenience toward Herod! Lallaby, when lulled by the beatitude he finds in his womankind, would express his satisfaction by a steady, raucous "purr," were his interior mechanism capable of it. I have often longed for some rude shock that should jar him, all at once, from this simmering rapture. Heaven forgive me that I could have cherished that aspiration about *him*!

And Lallaby's cat. It has its value in this synthesis. A gaunt, mean cat, if e'er there was one, with fur of divergent trend; a cat whose low nature conserves its creepy emaciation despite abundant alimentation. Lallaby attends to that as religiously as a Mussulman says his prayers. I can see him now, pouring milk into a saucer, drying its edge carefully before setting it on the floor—Why?—and then lapsing into Quietism as the lank, ungrateful beast gluttonously "clicks" it dry.

Of course, I am not so flagrantly unjust as to excoriate Lallaby for being such a domestic creature; so placid, so methodic, so grateful for nothing, so hideously respectful and contented. This circumstantiality in setting him forth, and my confessing to the jarring effect upon me of his childlike lowliness and prim little "two-by-four" ways, is because they are elements in my present hopelessly confused impression of him as a Doubt and Mystery.

Lallaby is a baker. I believe they are always neat and reposeful. I am a reporter. I believe they are not altogether impassive and unopinionated. I met Rogers first at a time when a taste for murder and cognate crimes had possession of the submerged class that supplies relish to the news columns for the hectic population of Gotham, which savors "something new" as rabidly as did the Athenians of De-

mosthenes's time. The exercise of murder rarely betrays genius, or any fascinating artistic invention, except when murderer and victim are united in the one person. The only distinction it achieves in the metropolis, as a rule, is brutishness, or a prodigal, unpunished occurrence. At the time I speak of, the epidemic was marked by as singularly raw a brutality and opulence of cruelty as could be desired.

A woman, the wife of a 'longshoreman, slain by some mad *débauché* of slaughter, was the primary instance of this Macabre homicidal mania. Long gashes scored her rather stout person, although there were two or three vicious stabs that made further knife-work quite gratuitous. When her riotously slashed body was discovered, it was not yet cold. Her husband was snoring fathoms deep in a drunken coma in another room: the result of two or three days' hardy application to alcoholic refreshment.

Lallaby's bakery was in the neighborhood and I interviewed him on the subject. It would be amusing to see how it would affect him; to secure his "point of view." A dove's comments on St. Bartholomew's Night! I recall, with a shudder, the unemotional way in which he heard the news. Evidently it was only the sunny, childlike delights of life that appealed to his innocent nature. "They used to fall out sometimes, they say. But I didn't think he had any hard feeling toward his lady. Did you, Mary?" And when Mary *didn't*, he composedly prepared the milk for his insatiate cat, and seated himself to enjoy the pretty genre. How appropriate a pendant to this tableau seemed the colored print of two little girls that hung directly above his head, the chief decoration of the room. One had adventured a toy skiff on a streak of ultramarine, and the other, with a too palpable air of being contributory to the composition, stood by in the bravery of ruffled pantalettes, one hand upon a beriboned lamb and two saccharine blue eyes fixed on the spectator with a wheedling "Vos plaudite" air. To

Lallaby, this ideal of innocence and "bread-and-butter" primness was a domestic ikon from which a Fragonard could not have weaned him. His smugness, his arch enjoyment of the clackily bibulous cat, the awful print, and the modest but exquisitely neat and "homey" coziness of the room, impressed me strongly through contrast with the slovenly quarters where the grimly murdered woman lay in her own puddled blood, her drunken husband, in almost as deep a sleep, snoring stertorously within.

I had not seen Lallaby more than three or four times before I felt that I knew him from "turret to foundation stone." To know him at all was to know his childlike, simple, limited nature entirely. That is what I felt then!

It was not long before another murder, again that of a woman, was attended by signs of an even greater frenzy on the part of the slaughterer; for her slayer was certainly that. I do not think the most seasoned surgeon could have endured the sight without feeling that a stiff draught of liquor would be a helpful antidote. The "toughest" reporter on the staff, whose specialty was "writing-up" executions in a slangily facetious way, came from the scene with a bleached visage and an unclassifiable distortion of the mouth; possibly a sorry "bluff" at sardonic expression.

As before, no clue to the murderer. It began to excite the public that such orgies of blood-letting on defenseless women should be so uncannily screened. The cunning of the monster who wreaked his mad lust for murder so gluttonously was an appalling note. One of the most lurid of the metropolitan scavenger dailies presented a fancy sketch of "The Knifer." The monstrous blend of gorilla, prize-fighter and Dantesque demon, seemed only slightly symbolical. Stout women in secluded neighborhoods must have lost weight if they kept up with the grisly chronicle of the human fiend's orgy, for three more similar tragedies ensued. None of the victims had been despoiled of anything but life.

I had been told to "get something" out of the case. I *did*! I had been "run down" for some time, and having to deal with this noisome mystery tipped the beam. I was laid on my back with fever and nervous prostration. I could only secure sleep by the use of opiates. I had never been driven to them before. The drugs got into my brain and roused weird, blood-streaked phantoms. In this woefully over wrought state I suddenly be-thought me of Lallaby, as a counter-irritant that might prove a sedative. His retiring note, the steady, soft forthrightness of his gaze, his restful simplicity, his untaxing talk, all promised a feathery, benumbing dulness that might soothe my shying brain. I sent for him. He came.

He primly fitted himself into a cushioned rocker, as a dove might cuddle into a mossy nest (the "dove" suggestion insistently beseems the sleek, prosaic creature), and suavely regarded me as with an aloof curiosity, very slightly oscillating his chair the while. Surely enough, his lambent gaze, mild, purring voice and measured common-places, delicately hypnotized me. As his personality involved me like a slumberous mist, his voice seemed coming from afar over lone, heathery stretches and numbed me, more and more, into a mild paralysis.

Whence it sprang, I know not. But it possessed me utterly, without one tinge of doubt, the moment it gripped my brain. There was not the faintest preliminary suggestion. So strongly did it rive my consciousness, that, looking on the suave figure in its Quaker sobriety and littleness, the words were ripped from me like a poignant groan.

"How *could* you do it, Lallaby!"

I seemed to sense a movement in him, like a canary hopping along its perch. His round, fixed eyes appeared to blink with expansion and contraction, as the setting sun does to the steadfast gazer, and something veiled and tenuous, like the heat-waves from a parched field, shrouded them. I do not know when, but a slow, droning voice came from afar in Sabbath tones, clicking off

its speech as a colonial clock does the minutes:

"It comes on me. And I have to. The sudden start, the change of face, the not knowing why, are like a dose of Life to me. Something does it through me. I have to push the knife into some soft part. The breast. The bowels. They feel it, all at once. The way they act is like a big, strong drink, that makes me rock and throb with them . . .

"You think of me, with my girls"—the light, level voice went monotonously on with its isochronic utterance, like a weak wind souging through the pines—"and Mrs. Lallaby"—was there a stiffening nuance, as of pride?"—"and you can't see the pleasure in such a strong thing, for me. But the first warm gush has something soothing. It rests me."

One soft hand was laid upon the other. Their position in the Park on holidays, as the gay world streams by!

"But the excitement, and real satisfaction"—there was a tinge of animation in the impersonal tones—"is drawing the sharp knife—quick! *squish!*—through parts that give easy. It runs so smooth. With just enough resistance. Like slashing fresh dough. But exciting! Sometimes it strikes a bone"—a delicate shudder ruffled his face—"O-o! It spoils it!"

I listened spell-bound to this naively demoniac Epicureanism. The confession throbbed on:

"The awful thing is"—ah! he was still *human!*—"the messiness. It can't be helped, that I can see. No arranging for it. And then the person—all disarranged, on the floor! So slippery and soiled! Just *disorderly*. But of course"—here his air of accepting things with gentle resignation—"I don't have to stay long—when it is done. And I do it quickly. They get cold. The knife can't run easy and quick. I am not very strong." Was this apology? Or resignation? He had come to a pause as lightly as a scrap of plumy down strikes the floor.

My brain was leaping like a bucking broncho under the nameless horror.

Was Lallaby describing this diversion as if it were in the same class as his giving milk to "Blackie," though more keenly reposeful? As thought of his "subjects" gripped my dazed mind I muttered, shudderingly: "But their sufferings! *Man!*"

His eyelids flickered. A hurt feeling seemed to flit across the impassive disk of his face, as if it pained to be thus arraigned.

"Can I help it? Any more than the untidiness? I don't like it. But how could they have that look of terrible surprise? Their faces jump that way *because* they are hurt." A pause. Then, thoughtfully, as if to solace: "You know they only feel it for a minute. I don't suppose—you can guess—how it feels—to push a sharp knife—all at once—into a live person—who is not thinking of such a thing." This dripped from him in his familiar and winning way of minimizing unavoidable disagreeables; in the present instance, apparently, to extenuate my lack of sympathy by imputing it to ignorance and inability "to put myself in his place."

I felt as if I were experiencing tortures inflicted on someone else. I did not apprehend myself as the confidant of Lallaby. It seemed imbecile to admit my inability to regard murder as a light and temperate pastime, even for exceptional natures! Yet I was apparently rated as either narrow or inconsiderate toward an idiosyncrasy, because I had not such conviction. I could not speak. Soon words again tingled on my ear, like sheep-bells sounding through a cold mist.

"I don't do it often. But it is my great delight," he was saying, as if apologetically. "It is a *rocking* delight," he declared, using in his exaltation, for the first and only time, a metaphor. "It is the only strong one I have. And only at times. I do not want to get the habit. Sometimes the desire comes about the wrong person. I have felt it two or three times about—you," he added, shyly. Could this have been a bourgeois attempt at flattery? "How *you* would have

that surprised look, sir. *Wouldn't you?*"

I could conceive no reason why I should not, nor any need of confessing that I would. I was too engrossed with the ethical side of the question, which, it would seem, did not exist for Lallaby, to express any assent. I merely faltered, gloomily: "Why don't you drop something heavy on their feet? Or pour ice-water down their backs suddenly?" That I was simply an intelligence in weird thralldom, and not my direct and consistent self, should seem proven when I suggested these cruelties as quasi-innocent devices that might appease an eccentric but artless passion for wanton murder. He met the futile effort kindly but firmly.

"Nothing could be so fine as that quick push of the knife and nice, spurting blood. And those swashing strokes afterward," he said pensively. "*Nothing.*" He cuddled the memory to him. Though dilettante, he was enamored of his art.

A wave of hot wrath seemed to flush my torpid brain at such dogged perversity in this two-penny baker! His jaunty insensibility was infuriating.

"Do you think I will let this *go on*? Be your *accomplice*? Not hand you over to the law? Let you make bread, the staff of life! with hands *bloody from murder*?" I panted.

Ha! I had shattered his stolid egoism. Though it was not pallor, but a faint flush that charged his immobile face. His retort was like the yap wrung from a trampled puppy, instinctive and protesting rather than reproachful.

"There is *never* blood on my hands when I bake! Or anything *dirty*! Can you find a cleaner bakery in all New York? I can't bear a spot of dust in my shop or my house! You are joking, sir," he said. "You couldn't have meant that. But perhaps I had better go." I remained silent. "Mary sometimes forgets to give milk to the cat. And the girls feel better when I am near them. I don't leave the shop often."

I had glowered sullenly. But this protecting solicitude for his own unimportant brood, and immunity to the most primitive feeling for his brother man at large, made me flare with fierce, righteous wrath. He did not leave his shop—*often!* I burst into flame.

"You will go and give milk to your ingrate cat? You will exult over your precious family? You will take them to see the glory of the rich? And as a reward of virtue you will steal forth and knife some fat, unprotected woman to her death, because it *quiets* you? *Never again!*" My voice rose and I started up in bed. "I will stop it. You shall leave here with handcuffs on your wrists."

It seemed hammered out on my brain, mechanically. With the mounting frenzy of indignation my mind began to clarify, and fully cleared itself in one wild, damning cry: "*You are Lallaby the Murderer!*"

I saw him more distinctly now. His features and expression seemed to go through some slight change also, as if restoration to my normal self had reacted on him. He was leaning forward slightly, his soft, clean little hands grasping the arms of the chair, regarding me with the quiet, subservient, not servile, attention which was his wont. His lips were slightly parted.

"Do you feel better now?" he inquired, with conventional solicitude. "Wouldn't it be good for you to be left alone? Perhaps visitors excite you. You are not quite well yet. You are not yourself."

I felt, indeed, miles away from the moment before. It was like emerging from an anesthetic. I looked around the room, discovering it as my own. What brain fantasy had I been gavoting with? What had I *really* said in the fierce whirlwind from which I was still panting? He met my puzzled stare with the tolerant patience one accords to invalids, the conventional readiness to extenuate their irresponsible caprices.

"Lallaby, did I say anything—just now—*out loud*? Haven't we been talking for some time?" My brain seemed

clear, but I could not classify late happenings convincingly.

"Oh, you have *talked* some," he said, with a slow, trig smile. "I think you had better try to get a good sleep, now. And I wouldn't take more of that sleeping stuff than you have to. It doesn't seem to *quiet* you. Don't you feel that it queers you?"

"Lallaby, tell me! I'm all right. Haven't *both of us* been talking? Didn't you tell me—*something*?"

"Well, I wouldn't call it *talking*." The faint smile came to his lips, the small, decorously friendly smile, though I seemed to catch a shifty expression in his unblenching gaze like that which grips a cat's when it is stalking a bird. "You have been half-asleep, until just now. You mumbled and tossed and looked at me, and then, just now, you got a grip on yourself and seemed to wake up. Isn't it your sleeping stuff? I think it is. You were never this way before."

"Lallaby"—I held him arraigningly with my eyes—"tell me what I said *just now*! When I '*seemed to wake up*.' I want to know. *Tell me!*" I knew that "Lallaby, the Murderer," which still roared in my brain, had been a logical result of all that had preceded: the climax, the explosive epitome of conviction's full flower. But had I *said* it? Or *thought* it only? And *what* had led up to it?

"Oh, it will seem silly!" he returned, with rather deliberate deprecation. "I'd just as lieve tell you"—with a slight movement of the head. Certainly Lallaby had not the typical criminal cranium! Then, as if concluding from the tense worriment of my face that it were better to satisfy a sick man's curiosity than try to bring him to reason, he went on, with a sheepish air, but with a clear, even, precise enunciation: "Well, then. You said: 'Lallaby, you are a bloody bad baker, and I will carve you up. Because I have to.'"

"Now, don't you think I'd better go and let you sleep?" he added, with almost motherly air, as he rose, his dumb eyes fixed on me. "I didn't

mind it, of course. But it was funny, after your starting up and muttering, to hear you say that so distinctly, and as if you was terribly 'put out.' Let me shake up your pillow for you. There! And I'd go easy on that night-mare-making stuff. Unless you *have* to take it! *Good night, sir.* I hope you will feel better in the morning, and be up and 'round soon."

I half-nodded, but said not a word. I could not hear his light, retreating footsteps, and barely caught the sound of the door closing. Lallaby was gone. But oh! Lallaby has remained! *How* he has remained.

I was soon on my feet again. The murders had ceased! But that branding cry, "Lallaby the Murderer," is one that I can hear myself uttering again whenever my memory recalls that night. I cannot see Lallaby that the fancy does not chill me that he may have stolen forth, not long before, with his knife on him! bent on purposes of *pleasure*. I feel as if the blood-scent must raven him *just so often!* There is always the recoil from these ominous adumbrations, when I picture the soft, negative man's simplicity, his ordinariness, and above all his childlike, lowly content, gift so rare to-day, and unknown in New York! I tell myself I am criminally unjust, odiously inhuman, rankly suspicious. As well impute Machiavellian astuteness to a Maltese kitten!

And even as I berate myself the pendulum swings back to the logical condensation of that night visit, that illuminative, convincing cry: "Lallaby the Murderer." It was so akin to inspiration, such a crown to what had preceded and had precipitated it, that I again wearily wonder if the little baker be a monster of crime, trebly guarded by Satanic duplicity and cunning. So, conviction swings between the Dove and the Sphinx, and Lallaby is to me a Mystery, a Doubt, *in sæcula sæculorum*.

There is an odd corollary to all this, a dramatic happening which has a like Janus look in opposite directions.

About a week after my recovery, impelled by several reasons, I called on the little baker. I chanced upon the Lallaby ménage at the noonday meal, which I would not suffer them to interrupt. A loaf of fresh bread had been sliced, and the knife lay near it. One of the flaccid girls—through what impulse who may tell!—aimlessly grasped it and struck its edge lightly against the pad of her thumb, somewhat as a barber tests his razor. A tiny spurt of blood attended her folly, and she let the knife fall, uttering a puny, quavering wail. It was such a piece of senseless trifling that her whimpering bid for sympathy only made my hand tingle to box her ears. To my stupefaction a kindred impulse on the part of "Mrs. Lallaby" met with amazingly ready compliance; for she cuffed her offspring roundly.

"See what you have done, you wicked girl!" she cried gustily. And disregarding utterly the child's amazed gulps: "It came to me. I *had* to!"—which turned me cold!—she continued: "You *know* your father can never stand the sight of blood."

I glanced at Lallaby with a catching of the breath. His prosaic face was like white wax, and even as I looked the last protesting flicker of his horrified clear gray eyes faded into blankness. He had swooned!

"You see what it does to him," his wife explained querulously, as she proceeded to revive him. "He has always been queer about blood, that way."

I had seen, but the question leaped to my mind: "*What* way?" Nero is said to have had moments of lovely tenderness. The episode was a sidelight; not an exorcism. And that child's excuse: "It comes on me. And I *have* to!" Was this the voice of heredity? And was it the second time I had heard it advanced by one of them extenuatingly? I had heard it before! And so Lallaby remains, more than ever, a Doubt, which nothing can rout. And still—?

THE ANGEL WITH THE BOOK

By Madison Cawein

WHEN to that house I came which, long ago,
My heart had builded of its joy and woe,
Upon its threshold, lo! I paused again,
Dreading to enter; fearing to behold
The place wherein my Love had lived of old,
And where my other self lay dead and slain.

I feared to see some shape, some Hope, once dear,
Behind the arras, dead; some face of fear
With eyes accusing that would sear my soul,
Taking away my manhood and my strength
With heartbreak memories. . . . And yet, at length,
Again I stood within that house of dole.

Somber and beautiful with stately things
The long hall lay; and by the stairs the wings
Of Life and Love rose, marble and unmarred:
And all the walls, hung grave with tapestry,
Gesticulated sorrow; gazed at me,
Strange speculation in their dark regard.

Through one tall oriel the close of day
Glared with its crimson face and laid a ray,
A burning finger, on the stairway where
A trail of tears, as of a wounded heart,
Led to a passsage with a room apart,
A room where Love had perished of despair.

Now all was empty—silent even of sighs:
And yet I felt within that room were eyes,
Unearthly eyes I dared not look upon
And feared to see; within them hell and heaven
Of all the past: I dared not: and yet, even
While still I stood, my feet were slowly drawn

Into that room lit with those eyes . . . I saw
An Angel standing with the Book of Law;
His raiment glittering from head to feet,
And swords of light and darkness in his eyes;
He stood, the great book, open to the skies,
Like some great heart throbbing with rosy heat.

One moment burned the vision: then I heard,
 Not with my ears, but with my soul, this word:—
 "I am the Law through which Love is. Each one
 Through me must win unto his heaven or hell.
 I build the house in which the memories dwell
 Of joy and sorrow. Now my task is done."

And so he vanished, smiling. Holy fear
 Bowed me to earth; and flaming, very near,
 I felt his presence still, like some strange spell,
 That turned my vision inward where I saw
 That this was Love, whose other name is Law,
 For whom was built my House of Heaven and Hell.



FLOWER FLEETS

By Rhoda Hero Dunn

SOFTLY, drifting sweetness floats
 High in garden bowers.
 May has launched her fairy boats,
 Set her sails of flowers.

Now from blossom-ports once more,
 Urged by leafy wing,
 And propelled by petaled oar
 Fare the ships of Spring.

See their airy navies press
 Over seas of bloom!
 Into bays of loveliness,
 Harbors of perfume!

Yet, alas! how soon must these
 Fluttering fleets of flowers
 Join the faded argosies
 Of forgotten hours!



WHAT HE SHOULD DO

CHOLLY—I'm nobody's fool.

SHE—No? And I understand you have money. Why don't you advertise?

AN UNIMAGINATIVE MAN

By Edna Kenton

IN a triple mirror whose reflections were multiplied by a skilfully held hand-glass, Miss Gwendolyn Gordon surveyed her maid's work, and then, with that abandon peculiar to the artistic temperament, whether it belongs to a Whistler-like soul or to a show-girl's, she thrust both hands into the mass of "puffs" and "rats" and "rolls," and made instant havoc of the work of half-an-hour.

"Good Lord, Martha!" she uttered in shrill disgust. "When I say I don't want any frills today, why do you pile every pound o' morgue hair I got on me! I was thinkin' hard, and I let you tunnel along my head without oversight. Now you get that dead hair off just as quick as you can find the pins, and give me the simple life up there for a change. I got to please a man with imagination."

For only a few minutes longer she fretted under her maid's ministrations; then her umbrage at the prevailing modes in hair-dressing overcame her completely, and she wasted no words in dismissing her woman. There are other means, in Miss Gordon's circles, of achieving that end without words. Once alone, the young woman reached out a lithe arm after the hair-brush which had served its part in signifying her desire for solitude, and set about her unwonted task herself.

"He's been lookin' at me without seein' me for all of two weeks," she muttered to herself as she struggled with her fairly abundant hair, whose ends, when massed against the roots, showed clearly the fickleness of fashion. "It's come to this, that I got to get a line on what he wants me to do, and the

quickest way to do that is to scare him to death. Gosh, but I look funny!"

She glanced from her reflections in the mirror to her dressing-table, where lay in profligate confusion three-fourths of that which usually crowned her head. Every strand of hair not her own, as well as all of those foundations of up-to-date coiffures which do not even pretend to be hair, she had courageously discarded, to part her own tresses Madonna-wise, to draw them all with skilful rollings and twistings to the top of her head, and to arrange them there in a simple, virginal, coronal braid. After thrusting her least pretentious back-comb into the rear of the structure she gazed at it all with obviously adverse criticism.

"If he likes this he's had all he could do for weeks to keep from tearing all that off my head," she commented. "But as near as I jerked it out of him last night, he hankers after a part over my forehead and a lot of braids up here; sounds old-fashioned to me; sounds—" Her eyes narrowed, vixenish eyes they were, so. "Good Lord, it sounds like another woman!"

Miss Gwendolyn Gordon, late of the "Blue Moon Varieties" and at present connected with "The Silver Witch" company, pushed her toilet things aside and sank back into her pillows. None of her make-up for the day had gone on yet, so her pallor might be perceived as it deepened, and deepen it did, until she looked rather undeniably yellow.

"That's what it is!" she muttered at length. "You plum fool, Gwen, not to know it for a fact from the start. What other man you ever knew set around, starin' at you like he was goin' to eat

you alive the next minute, and yet every time he opened his jaw did it to ask you to take off all your rings but one—think of that for a fool favor to ask!—or tell you to haul your shoulders up more when you walked, and coax you to remodel every rag you got to suit some fool ideas of his. An' you, you fool, you done everything he had the impudence to ask you to do, and never had the sense to see he was criticizing you to your face; when he done everything but ask you not to talk—and twice he done that— *Come in!*"

The door opened to admit Martha with breakfast. The woman set the tray down with some emphasis beside her mistress, and that good-natured young animal, because she could not endure strained conditions, observed with a rather forced breeziness:

"Pipe the new headstall, Martha. Ain't it fit for a Derby winner?"

The woman replied with an accentuated reserve:

"You kaint look bad no way you fix yo'se'f, Miss Gwen. An' I will say this, that it makes you look almos' the lady. But as fer reel style an' git up an' git—"

At an impatient jerk of her mistress's arm the woman slipped out, leaving Miss Gordon to her solitary chocolate, and solitary indeed that young woman felt as she drank it.

"Almost a lady!" she muttered. "I bet a thou' that's what the other woman *is*—a lady! All of it reads that way. 'Cut out the red dresses and hats!' he's said to me, and I ain't got one left to my name; that, when every manager's said to me that red's sure my color. 'Hold your shoulders up!' he's said—well, *that* done me good—derrick'd me out o' the 'Blue Moon' into the 'Witch.' And for goodness' sake, it's what's been getting me comps from all over, the duds he's made me get. 'Try green!' he said to me, me that never wore green in my life till he threw me into it, 'cause it'd match my eyes! But that's what they all say now: 'It matches your eyes, Gwen!' Well, anything that makes 'em talk sounds right to me, and if green does it, same as red— *Come in!*"

It was her maid again, this time with a card, which Miss Gordon took with a frown and read with an awed pleasure.

"Tell him I'll be right out; then come back and get me dressed. Put out that new green Empire thing—"

Miss Gwendolyn Gordon rose from her bed with a lithe swirl of French lingerie and silken dressing-gown, and went through the process of robing with such despatch that she was all but encased within the slim Empire gown before Martha reappeared. Before she opened the door into her sitting-room she gave one half-uncertain look at her oddly coiffured head.

"Blamed if I like it," she murmured. "It ain't the *style!* But as near as a man can tell a thing to a woman, he told this thing to me. So here goes!"

And she opened the door recklessly wide upon her morning caller.

Her caller rose as she entered, a tall, well-built man, verging perhaps upon the era of growing portliness, but with a waist-line still. He had the air of a thoroughbred and the grooming of one, with a native refinement and reserve which all but plead however mutely, for explanation of their owner's presence there in Miss Gordon's sitting-room, as opulent and voluptuous and splendidly vulgar as its mistress.

Yet this morning Calloway looked at her with a quick intake of the breath, with deepening gaze and in perfect silence, and as she gazed back on him she knew that she had not only sensed aright his suggestion for her hair arrangement, but also that she had sensed too the source of it. For Calloway was staring not at her, but through her.

"He ain't seein' me for a minute," said the girl to herself wistfully.

She was not a woman of fine fiber, and whatever in her had originally been of better timbre than the rest was irreparably coarsened now. But her solution of the secret of this man's attention stung her rather sharply, notwithstanding her worldliness and her cynicism and her actual hard-heartedness; stung her more deeply than the wounded self-love which had

been feasting on an admiration which was not hers, but belonged to some memory which she embodied. "It's another woman!" she had said. This then was why he had dallied for weeks content, where all the others had endured days only before demanding favors to whose allurements he was curiously blind. If she had not been as afraid of him as she was, she would have spoken then and have lost a chance which afterward came to her for doing a deed of which she must always think proudly to the end of her days. But fear held her back from speaking boldly to this man whom she did not understand, but whom she might have come, and that right swiftly, to adore.

Calloway spoke at last: "You look—fine, Gwen!" His tone was a little forced, and his eyes moved at last from her face and would not meet her eyes. He sat down in a much-draped chair and lighted a cigarette; from behind its sheltering smoke he dared to watch her again, furtively, with an attempt at casualty.

The woman in her turn scrutinized him fiercely, and it was with undisguised savagery that she spoke at last:

"Look here, Calloway, what are you hanging round my place for, anyway, all these weeks? I ain't got a line on you yet."

She had been wise had she stopped with the attacking question, for Calloway straightened under it, but with her admission of ignorance he sank back into his old attitude, smiling.

"I don't bore you, I trust, my dear Gwen. You have only to tell your woman any time that you're not at home."

"Well, that, of course," she said weakly, with a curl of her rather sullen lip. She continued to stare at him furtively.

"Did I get my hair up right?" she flashed out suddenly.

"It's perfect," he said. "I knew it—it suits your face, the outline of it, your forehead, your profile—"

His old manner of gazing on her had come back, and she suffered it this

morning with something that was almost courage, for she had a clue and, after the manner of her kind, she was slow to let go.

"I got a lot of new hats yesterday," she remarked at length. "Want to see 'em?"

She moved across the room in her lissom, pale silken gown, with a glance or two at herself in the mirrors which all but lined each of her rooms, and now and then she caught a reflection of his brooding gaze at her, a gaze intent, concentrated and more than slightly tinged with sadness.

"What's he been doing this for?" she asked herself as she mauled over some boxes stacked in an alcove. "What does he mean by tryin' to make me over into another woman—like her?"

She came back to him with a hat which might have done for any vaudeville stage, however refined, and looked disappointed when he shook his head.

"Something quieter than a fire-gong, Gwen," he prayed her.

"This ain't for any Fifth avenue funeral," she cautioned him gently. "This is for my Spring strolls along Broadway, Bobby, old man."

Calloway laughed lazily. Gwen Gordon had always amused him. He had never tried to resist her from the first, and later it had come to be the resource of his somewhat deadened life, this delving for hidden threads, this seeking for the angel in the marble. And somehow, in spite of her tantrumish temper and gusty self-will, she had been as pliable as wax in his hands. Today he saw no change in her from what she had been for weeks.

So he sat watching her idly as she tried hat after hat. Finally he nodded.

"That's the right one, Gwen, the only one that suits you now, with your hair like that. Take it, like a good girl."

She pouted sullenly. "You don't want me to keep a thing around me that's got any life to it. This ain't nothin' on God's earth but black and white. Let me have a dash o' somethin' up here, anyway, some red roses,

or some gold ones—come on, Bobby, do!"

Calloway threw up his hands in despair. "Take it, and my word for it, till you can see it for yourself. Haven't I steered you right so far?"

"You have for a fact, Bobby," she admitted grudgingly. "I reckon that's the reason I've been taking your impudence. You're the only man that's ever had the nerve to tell me I'd look better in somethin' I haven't got, and then the nerve to make me prove it. But your taste is certainly quiet."

Calloway roared. "But something is making your maniacal beauty stand up as it never stood up before," he said at last. "What do you want of red roses with that mouth of yours, or gold ones with those almondy eyes? Just try that on the promenading bald-heads, Gwen; it's all I ask."

"Oh, I've been tryin' 'em all on," Gwen Gordon replied. "And it's a fact that I've been making the hit of my life up and down Broadway. But what are you doin' it for, Bobby?"

The old, common query flashed out again, its caustic quality unameliorated by any addenda. Calloway got up and walked the length of the gaudy sitting-room quite calmly, yet with an inner quailing, not before the query, but before the answer. In his heart he was ashamed of it.

"You are a beautiful woman, Gwen," he said at length, in that contemplative tone which she hated, for it made her feel cheaper, in some indefinable way, than her own rating of herself, which was not high. "A beautiful woman, but ignorant as a Hottentot of the way to show off that beauty. Call it a missionary spirit in me; call it anything you choose to call it, and do as you please about taking the suggestions, my dear."

There was not an atom of threat in his voice, or in his mind, for that matter, but something told Gwen Gordon that when she stopped taking the suggestions he threw out, Calloway would be seen in her abode no more. And the virility of the man appealed to her strongly, and the breed of him, which was fine

and dated from ancient days. Thanks to her seven or eight years of chorus drillings and show-girl posings, she knew many men, but no man like Robert Calloway. On the night of their first meeting, when he had come around to her dressing-room, something in his eyes had intoxicated her, and she thought they were drinking from the same cup. But if the succeeding weeks had taught her no more, they had taught her this, that his drunkenness that night was not like hers. Nor had it ever been.

She waited a moment before replying, taking counsel of common sense.

"He's tipped me one or two good things, anyway," she said to herself. "We'll try out this new hair deal in the show before I send things smash. Wring him dry before you throw him over, and make him good for something for all the time you've wasted on him!" A bit of bravado that was interestingly hollow, for just then she could not have willed to let him go and see him no more.

"Well, I've sure behaved like a well brought up Hottentot," she muttered at last; "to take all your sass from you and dike myself out in these duds without seeing an inch ahead of me where I was going to land. And this is the worst! But I'm goin' to try out even this."

"Not in the 'Witch'!" Calloway exclaimed protestingly.

"Sure, in the 'Witch'!" the lady rapped out. This protest was not conclusive, but it was confirmatory of her unhallowed suspicion, and she was not inclined to spare him. "If it's as good as you say it is, it ain't right for me to conceal it from the public and it ain't justice to myself." She laughed grimly at Calloway's dashed silence.

But the success, professional and personal, during the next fortnight, of this Madonna coiffure brought her to her knees at last before Calloway's taste and judgment.

"There's no use trying for him," she mused at last, common-sensibly enough, over a Sunday array of new photographs. "But he tipped me right

when he tipped me this. It's made more talk than I've ever had, not even when that mizzable little French count went dippy with absinthe and tried to shoot himself at supper that night. No, there's no use tryin' for him. I've done my best to make him talk, but he's as tight-mouthed as your real swells always are, and I've still got nothin' but my guess to go on, but I bet I'm dead right. Look at him last night, with me in that white dud and my hair fixed his way, and me starting in to tell him all about Dotty Dare and that young fool of a Van Lippe—he knows Van, too, and I sure know Dotty—and all he said was, 'Gwen, don't talk for a while, just sit still and let's be quiet!' It sounds sort o' delirious to me, but he's dead level every other way, and that's no joke; never goes off his head by a breath, and I've done my best. So we'll see what else he's got up his sleeve in the way of nifty tips, and then, some time, just to break even, I'm goin' to throw him so far and so fast that it'll make his head feel like a scrambled egg. But time enough for that; meantime I'm goin' to dash sentiment and get down to the fine art of lookin' like some lady—I ain't one, and don't want to be one, but it seems to take with the managers and the audiences, and under those circumstances I'm willing to own I'm wrong and he's right."

So Gwen Gordon, harshly killing in its infancy an emotion which promised to bring her woe without compensation, set about her task with a cool sort of interest which was quite a match for Calloway's abstract absorption in her charms. And as the weeks went by, she gleaned so much and winnowed it so thoroughly that she became a match for the costumers themselves on the gentle art of blending her own particular colors as prescribed by Calloway, and she herself grew slowly into a picture of refinement and elegance. It was a picture changed in a flash when she opened her ripe lips and spake, but, saving Calloway only, she had no friends to whom her type and her speech seemed incongruous, and she herself was

aware of no gulf fixed between the outer and the inner woman; and with the outer woman she grew tremendously satisfied. Once in a while in days past she had left or had been taken out of her own professional haunts where the feathered hat abounds and the neutral tone is not, and had entered the restaurant or tea-room of the ultra-fashionable, where she had always felt at loss without knowing why. But in these latter days when Van Lippe, having recovered recently from Dotty Dare's lassoing of a handsomer man, and being much taken with Gwen's new aura and refined charms, was taking her about the various haunts of fashion and elegance, Miss Gordon was discovering that her old embarrassment no longer tortured her, and the afflicting insolence of the waiters, which had infuriated her before, had given miraculous way to that quality which is a waiter's personal property by all the witnessing of all novelists, obsequiousness. In a word, to all outward appearance she was one of them, in the tone of her costuming, in the individuality of her accoutrements, whereas before she had stood for nothing but a type of her class. She did not yet know that in such surroundings her silence was diamond-precious if she were to preserve the illusion her looks created, and so her unpierced self-esteem added to the effect for which Calloway alone was responsible. And by-and-bye, with her increasing self-assurance and Van Lippe's ardent adoration, there came one day and then another, and another, when she was not at home to Calloway, and Calloway, meeting her a few days later, by chance, said something to her in the way of permanent farewell which made her bridle and then blush, and then tremble slightly.

"Sure, everything's friendly," she said. "I got to look out for my interests, like any girl, and Van Lippe's doing the square thing, so I'm playing square with him, see? And with him having an idea that what you say goes too much with me, I can't put him wise, can't tell what you and I both know—"

She broke off abruptly, biting her lip, and Calloway smiled encouragingly.

"What is that we both know?" he asked her lightly.

Gwen Gordon stared at him hard for a moment, quite as if she were fixing his face forever in her mind; then she rallied and laughed as lightly as he.

"That it was nothing but another woman, after all, that made you hang around me, and dress me up—"

She felt Calloway's hand on her arm for a second, in a grip so tight that she knew her shot had struck home; then it loosened and he fell back a step.

"The cursed intuition of you women!" he said, lightly still. "Yes, Gwen, I owe you that admission, since you sensed it. It's rather unforgivable—all but insulting! Well, I didn't mean it that way."

She glanced at him again, and then she turned her eyes away, for his face hurt her, since its grief and pain were not for her.

"Why, you done everything for me," she said cordially. "This way o' wearin' my hair's made me, just about; and I come to see what you meant by tellin' me to dress down to my type, 'stead of up. You've handed me a lot of straight tips, and I certainly got everything I ever handed you. Everything's been on the square in this deal, Bobby."

"I'm glad you think so," Calloway replied dubiously. "Well, good luck, Gwen. And if you don't mind, before you go, I'd like to have you tell me how you caught what you did."

Gwen Gordon smiled a typical woman's smile at that. "I guess you got me there, Bobby," she told him. "It was sort o' in the air—somehow you never acted like it was *me*, don't you know. Good luck to *you*, Bobby. And I hope to goodness, honest I do, that it'll be her, soon."

"No *such* luck," Calloway replied seriously. "Good-bye, Gwen."

She stood watching him as he went away from her. "I wish to goodness he could get her," she muttered. "Honest I do. For it never could 'a' been me,

and he's the only one that ever kept on playing the straight game."

And from that day a curious watch which she had learned to keep on all the feminine frequenters of tea-rooms and cafés and play-house boxes, unconsciously deepened as she went her careless, half-stolid, selfish way.

It was upon an afternoon late in the Spring that Miss Gwendolyn Gordon, attired in the most languid shade of dove-gray imaginable, and with a dove-gray hat which broke into the faintest possible reminiscences of forgotten lavenders, drifted into a Fifth avenue tea-room with a languidity which matched the tone of her dress, and sat down at a table near a window. She was very early, for the room was sparsely filled, and so, because it was a waste of time to have one's tea in an all but vacant tea-room, and because she was always possessed of the healthiest of appetites, she was enjoying her second order with the avidity of her first before the room began to fill with the daily influx of women callers and shoppers. She sat for some time, the centre of such eyes as were turned but once toward her, gaining more support, physical and mental, from them than from her several cups of tea. She rose just as a woman, also in dove-gray, came through the room, seeking an unoccupied table, and the waiter beckoned in bitter haste to an underling to remove the remnants of his lady's feast while he waited her slow pleasure to don the coat he was holding for her. The show-girl knows the value of the pause, and this one was filling it to the uttermost before wriggling like a luxuriously bred cat into her wraps. But just as she ended it by turning for her coat, she caught sight of the gray-clad woman standing within three feet of her, and there ensued then the most genuine pause of Gwen Gordon's public career. For she stared like one possessed, as the other woman, all ignorant of scrutiny, seated herself and began to loosen her coat.

Gwen obeyed the waiter's insistent touch and dived awkwardly into her dove-gray garment. She turned away

half-blindly—and then she turned back and leaned half across the table, her hands resting hard upon it.

"Say, ain't you Mrs. Calloway? Mrs. Robert Calloway?"

She quaked as she uttered the name—of the truth of her words she had no proof, for she did not know from any words that Calloway had ever let fall that he was married. Yet as she watched the woman's face she knew that the name was known to them both and that her dogged though half-unconscious searching of months was ended. For if ever a woman looked like her and she like another woman, the two of them were facing each other now. She did not have the perception to perceive the difference in the quality of the potter's clay which made them; she looked only on the design; the soft brown hair with its glint of yellow, arranged in the quaint style which she had made her own; the beryl-tinged eyes with the dark lashes that matched her own for blackness and length; the kittenish chin that gave the dash of spice to the Madonna forehead.

The other woman had recovered from her slight start as she heard the name. "I am Mrs. Calloway," she said simply, and the very quality of her voice dashed poor Gwen Gordon, who perceived in this pitiless moment what she had not known before, that fine feathers do *not* make fine birds. So she blundered badly.

"Big, tall, fine-looking man, head up and chest out, with a funny little scar over his left eye—that's him; that's Bobby. *I knew it!*"

Mrs. Calloway's delicate head was flung high. "You will grant that not all of Mr. Calloway's friends are mine," she said, still in that velvety voice. "If I made a mistake in taking this table, if it is still yours, pray let me surrender it."

"Now, don't you do that," said Gwen quickly. "For I got to talk to you—I got to talk." And without giving herself time to scare at the jump she took it, and found herself sitting in the chair she had just vacated. At the dangerous light that began to burn in Mrs.

Calloway's eyes she did not allow herself to flinch, for she was still eying her with ravenous eagerness, seeing more and more the likeness that the other woman had not perceived.

"You and me are dead ringers for each other, for sure," she said at length. "But I didn't know Bobby was *married* to you."

Mrs. Robert Calloway motioned swiftly to her waiter. "This is a public place, and I will have no public scene," she said in the softest voice imaginable. "But you will leave me immediately, or I shall go to another table."

"Now don't you do that," said Gwen Gordon. "I'm making a mess of this, but there ain't any reason why we shouldn't sit here together for a minute; honest to God, there ain't."

Held by the real passion in the girl's voice, Mrs. Calloway hesitated for a moment as the waiter came back to her, and as she continued to gaze into Gwen Gordon's eyes something in both their faces shifted and changed, Gwen's to fiercer pleading and Mrs. Calloway's to dubious interest. It was with a sense of permission granted, however, that Gwen, recovering herself first, spoke to the man.

"Some more for me, the same kind; that's right," Then she looked at Mrs. Calloway.

"That'll do for the folks here, won't it? and I ain't goin' to make a racket, honest. I'll talk low; all I want is for you to listen to a queer yarn. You ain't an idea yet of how I come to recognize you so quick. Well, because you and me look alike; can't you see it? He did, first time he ever saw, and he begun right off to pull me up out of the flashy into the classy crowd. He kept criticizing me all the time, suggested this and that that'd make me look better. First I thought it was imagination, sort of thing that sends folks phoney; then I got a hunch it wasn't that at all, nothing in the world but another woman, and that's right. He ain't got no imagination at all, not a bit of it; it was just hungry memory, that's all."

She paused a moment while her tea was being placed before her, and the other woman did not speak at all, but she was staring her vis-à-vis through and through.

"That's right," the but lately arrived "classy" lady continued. "I wish you *would* just let me go on, without sayin' a word to me. Somehow I got an idea we can't make out very well talking together, but I can tell my story if I'm let alone. Well, it was about ten months ago that I met Bobby first—say, I got to calling him Bobby right away; we none of us stand much for regular 'Mr.' back o' the curtain—and it comes natural and there ain't any harm meant, but I'll try to forget it from now on. Well, I met him after the show one night, and a crowd of us went out to supper together. He was just in the gang and just come along; struck me then the reason he come was because he didn't have anything better to do. That was ten months ago, and he didn't, did he? Well, that's what I thought. He was the odd one in the crowd, too, and all through supper he never done a thing but sit across from me and stare me plum out of face. Course I noticed it—he's a fine looker—and when we simmered through the lobster and the salad and got to dallying with the sweet stuff, we begun to change seats and he somehow got next to me. 'You'll know me next time you see the show, won't you?' I says to him, and he laughs a little. 'I beg your pardon,' he says, 'but I was wondering if you ever wore soft, leafy greens.' 'Like this?' I says, flipping my *crème de menthe*, and he just shivered. 'That's as crass as your red,' he says, and I kep' asking everybody in the show for days what 'crass' meant, cause I wasn't goin' to ask him. But I knew; he didn't like my red silk, and brand new it was. 'I never did,' I says, 'but it ain't any sign I won't, only I'm partial to red.' 'You oughtn't never to wear it,' he says to me, just like that, and it didn't make me mad. For all the time he kept looking at me, honest to goodness, like he could eat me up, and I was fool

enough to take it all in. 'If I got me a green dress would you come around to my place to see me in it?' I says, thinking of course that if I'd hooked him, next thing to do was to land him. 'Your type's beautiful,' he says, 'but it needs to be dressed down to, 'stead of up to.' And that was all his answer.

"Well, that night it went at that. But I kep' thinking about them looks of his and what he said, and inside of a week they was dressin' the chorus over and I got a pick of colors. There was a dull, sickish-lookin' green there, no snap to it, and it broke my heart to pass up a red an' cloth-o'-gold dress, but I done it, just for a try—and say, somehow it caught on. They kep' coming up to me that night, giving me the jolly, and all of a sudden I looked up and there Bob—there he stood, come round from the front. 'Will you come round to my place tomorrow?' I asks him, with a flirt to my green skirt, and he says, 'Yes, I'll come,' and I thought the dream in his eyes was all for me, and it tickled me to death."

She paused a moment to look across at the other woman.

"No, I never loved him. I never," she said harshly. "I could of, but I never. It ain't worth while to play the fool in my business—it's too distractin', and I dropped pretty quick, after all. He come up the next day, and kep' comin', and he'd just set round and josh a little, and never take his eyes from me, and now and then—well, I wish you could 'a' seen how quick he cleared my place of every bit o' live color I had. He kep' sayin', 'Low tones, low tones!'—first I thought he didn't like my voice; it was a long time before I tumbled that it was his name for all this lifeless color mess. But I truckled to everything he said from the first, and he criticized me like the dickens and it never made me mad a minute; I dunno why it didn't."

Her voice lingered a little over the wonder of it; then she caught herself up briskly.

"Time I tumbled was the morning I first put my hair up this way, same as yours. My hair hadn't been parted in

the middle since I was a kid, but I give it a swipe without lookin' at myself, and say, I wish you could 'a' seen what it done to me. I didn't know whether I liked it or not, but it made a different woman of me right off, and it struck me then all of a heap what he'd been doing to me all that time, fixing me up to look like another woman. It was right then I see he ain't got no imagination at all. And when he saw me that day—well, I knew I was dead right. He looked at me like a starved dog lookin' at a bone—and that's about all I meant to him, too—a bone!"

The slight bitterness of her tone brought her back to herself, and she jerked herself up again with a slightly acidulated bravado.

"Well, we broke even, and no meals lost. For while I was doin' all this bunk dressin' for him, the rest of Broadway was pipin' me off in a way that showed me I'd struck a pace I hadn't hit before. It took me a long time to like 'em, these 'low tones,' and every now and then I kind o' hanker for a red dress, for I sure love red. But I never had the follerin' before that I got now, ever since I took to these classy styles, and business is business. That's what I made the rest of my acquaintance with him—plain business. He gave me tips about duds that has certainly proved priceless, and for pay I let him set around and look me over after I got in 'em. That's all there ever was to it. 'Bout two months ago I met Van Lippe again, Ollie Van Lippe—he's a classy boy—and till I make up my mind what to do with him—there's lots to be said for and against—I had to let all my old timers slide, because he's sure a jealous brute. Anyway it was time to call it off with Bob—with him, for I'd learned a lot and it had got to be just plain dallying. This hair fixture made me on Broadway, for all the artists I met since tell me it's the only way that'll ever just suit me perfectly. So Bobby got his pleasure out of it and me my profit, and just a month or two ago I told him good-bye for keeps; nothin' much, but we understood."

"Well?" she questioned, after a long pause. The other woman raised her head.

"You have been very good, Miss—"

"I guess you ain't traveled round the theatres much lately," said the other. "Gwendolyn Gordon's my name."

"You have been very good, Miss Gordon," the other woman repeated steadily. "But just what can come of this—?"

"Nothin' can come of it," said Gwen Gordon quickly, "if you don't care for him no more. But if you do care—you see I don't know nothin' about it, whether you're still married or divorced or what, and it ain't nothin' to me—but if you do care, why, you see, everything can come of it, because—why, he ain't got no imagination at all; all he thinks of is you."

"No imagination!" breathed the woman, as she looked straight across at Gwen Gordon's rouged cheeks which accentuated to sheer deviltry the Christian sweep of hair, and at the whole coarse clay of her, set opposite the fine porcelain of her, Robert Calloway's wife. For a moment a fierce gust of anger swept through her, at Calloway's daring to try to make over this woman into an imitation of her, and in the midst of it the woman across from her spoke again.

"No, he ain't got a shred of real imagination about him. I thought all the time he was seein' me as I might be, and it was all a lie; he was only seein' you as you were."

The gust of anger died in shame, and in that softened moment Gwen looked into her eyes again. Mrs. Calloway herself, with all her culture and all her fine delicacy of feeling, could not have put it better.

"Why, everything can come of this!" she breathed shrilly. "You do care; by God, you care, and care a heap."

She sat a moment in silence. "Well, I ain't goin' to drop this till I see it through," she said resolutely. "He treated me right and I'm goin' to treat him square. It looks like both of you was waiting for the other, and I got

hold of you both. You won't send for him?— No, I knew you wouldn't. We women hardly ever will own up, either that we're dead wrong or that we love 'em in spite of anything. Well, will he come to you if I was to tell him about this, was to tell him to?"

She waited until Mrs. Calloway shook her head slowly.

"Well, then," she demanded peevishly, "what'll we do! He cares for you and you care for him, and I know it and you know all I know. Ain't it the dickens that humans won't let 'emself be happy!"

For a moment there was silence; then:

"Say, won't you send for him?" Gwen begged, and begged again before Mrs. Calloway shook her head. "But you've owned he won't come to you till you do—that I can't make him come even with tellin' him this. *Won't you send for him?*"

She waited another moment for the negative, and then her eyes brightened fiercely.

"Well, then, I know what I'm goin' to do. Now, you sit still." But it took her hand, laid hard on Mrs. Calloway's wrist, to keep that lady from swift words as Miss Gordon rose to go to the desk telephone, immediately back of their table.

"Now I'm going to tell you everything I'm going to do," she said, "and you can hear every word I say, but I'm going to risk catching him at his office, and tell him to come up here to this here tea-room, to the table in the third window from the corner. Now don't you say a word. I hate to leave this thing to Fate, for it plays a lot of dirty tricks, and anyway, whatever comes, a talk together won't do you two any harm. Now don't you say a word."

And she called Calloway's number.

It was all over in a few moments, swift demand, swift reply to the unheard question, and demand again, urgent and appealing, and when it was ended, Mrs. Calloway sank back, worn with the stress of suspense which had

held, in spite of her inward protests, until she knew Calloway was on the wire.

"There!" said Gwen Gordon. "He knows where, and from what you heard me say, without a word of you, you can reckon he's coming lickety split."

She picked up her gloves and began to draw them on, smiling over the blaze of relief in the other woman's eyes at this, her preliminary to departure.

"Oh, I'm going," she said coolly. "But I ain't going to leave you alone for a minute till I see he's here. You can just guess that I'll skip that quick—then! Without him seeing me, if I can help it. But not till then."

After that the two women sat in silence for many minutes, waiting. Finally Gwen Gordon, who faced the entrance door, rose with desperate speed, and the other woman, in almost hysteric imitation, rose too. But she was pushed back into her chair.

"Now you sit right here," Gwen Gordon said deeply. "He's here, and I've done the best I know. If you do the same, I bet things come right."

It was this delay which brought Gwen Gordon and Calloway face to face for almost the last time; certainly for the last time which mattered in their lives. He looked at her almost savagely as he saw the woman sitting at the table, and then seeing the woman waiting, and for him, he looked back again to Gwen.

"She let you telephone me?" he asked, and as Gwen nodded, with a feminine rush of tears at which she cursed inwardly, he held out his hand to her. She took it with a queer little smile.

"If you got any imagination at all, use it now," she said to him, and trailed her dove-like way out.

At the door she turned, because she could not help it, and looked back. Neither Calloway nor Mrs. Calloway was speaking; they were not even looking at each other. But across the table, with its litter of tea things, their hands lay, clasped.



CONFIDENCES OF A COLLEGE WIDOW

By Edwin L. Sabin

I'M thirty-seven today—but no one knows it, and I don't intend that anyone shall! I've hidden the family Bible from even mama. She was asking for it just the other day, but of course I sha'n't have it lying around. Poor mama! with such a daughter still on her hands. However, I'm glad that my birthday comes during the vacation. That is a stroke of luck.

It's very dull here in Summer. Some of the girls complain. They won't, though, when they're my age. The dullness is *my* salvation: *I sleep!* Heigh-ho! sleep is a grand thing to keep one looking young. There's the postman! I'll go down in my wrapper; I'd just as lief as not—being vacation-time. Who cares?

It was a letter from "Tuffy." He's Professor Tuffitts, you know. Quite a young thing he is, and—oh, dear! His letter is exactly like him. He begins: "My dear Miss Elizabeth!" I've got him *that* far. Young assistant professors are always so funny and dignified. He's very smart, though, they say. His salary can't be more than \$900. That is what assistants get. I suppose we *could* live on it. I'm an adept already at making over my dresses.

"Johnny" (Mr. Johnson; he's a Senior Law this year) hasn't written me but twice, and I shall scold him good when I see him. He needn't think that he can play fast and loose with me, that way. No, no, "Johnny" boy. There will be Freshmen—and some of the Freshmen are awfully swell and require very little educating in gallantry. But

I sha'n't let "Johnny" get away from me if I can help it.

Horrors! I wonder if that *can* be a wrinkle! But I know how to fix it.

No, it was only where I had slept on myself. I will *not* have wrinkles.

College opens in one week. I must quit wearing slouchy clothes. The professors are coming in. Have not seen my "Tuffy" yet.

'Tis "the violet that blooms in the Spring, tra-la-la." The Freshmen are in town. I saw one—quite a nice-appearing little boy. I gave him a casual side-glance—my effective, darty kind. We shall know each other when we meet again. I cannot afford to lose any chances. I must go downtown often now. I'm looking "fit," I believe—thanks to the Summer sleep.

Several *dear* little Freshmen have arrived. Also some gawky ones. But "you never can tell." The football men are gathering, too. I ran into a lot of them at the post-office. Anybody is liable to be found at the post-office; that is why I want mama to have a box, during the Fall at least. Football men are dandy fellows—but, ah, me! They have to keep hours, you know; and I sha'n't stay away from dances *yet*; not on an uncertainty. Besides, they are so spoilt—most of the football men, I mean.

My "Tuffy" has turned up! We ran into each other downtown. I said how-de-do, and asked him when he was

coming to call, after his long neglect. He still has his ridiculous habit of blushing.

"Johnny" hasn't shown himself yet. And he hasn't written. Of course he will be back, to take Senior Law. His actions worry me somewhat. Freshmen are all right, for fun; but four years is a long time to wait, and I really should be "settled." A Senior Law is more substantial. So is an assistant professor—but "Tuffy" is discouragingly slow.

Met "Johnny" this morning! Consequently, *he* is here. I gave him just a nod, being very engaged with a Freshman—a high-school boy with trousers rolled ultra. They won't be so high after he has been a Freshman a while. Somebody introduced us—I forget who. At any rate, I dazzled him, and begged his high-school pin of him, and kept it—and he was so flustered that he let me! He was real cute, but I don't remember his name.

Last evening "Johnny" came around. He had the nerve to apologize for not writing! I had rather thought that he might come—after having seen me—so I donned my red house-gown and slept a few winks after supper, to look bright and rosy. I appeared quite surprised to behold him. And when he actually apologized—! I presume that most girls would have pretended that they hadn't noticed. However, not your Elizabeth. Hurt a man's pride, once, and he'll take you in earnest and next time he won't give you a chance. I didn't want "Johnny" flying off at a tangent. So I admitted right away that he had treated me *shamefully*—and then I left it that way and refused to discuss it any more. He felt uncomfortable and puzzled, "Johnny" did. I rather got ahead of him. He asked me to go driving; and sweetly dignified I was enabled to accept. It does not pay to let a man quarrel with you. He is much more tractable when he is on the defensive.

I've captured my Freshman. His name is Sproggs. One of the Tri-Eta boys brought him to call. I am supposed to be a Tri-Eta girl; but I'm any old girl (tut! "old" slipped out by mistake), as occasion demands. Time was when I thought I ought to stick by one fraternity, for prestige. "Loyalty" sounded so fetching, and the boys were gratified. 'Twas the trait of the silly young coot. Today I am a Tri-Eta girl to the Tri-Etas, and an Alpha Sig to the Alpha Sigs, and a Lambda to the "Lambs." There are possibilities in all the fraternities, and I shall not limit providence, *now*, by romantic school-girl "loyalty." I don't see that "loyalty" paid as it should.

Mr. Sproggs is rather callow, but he may develop. Of course I advised him to join the Tri-Etas. I made an excuse to go upstairs and then I put on a Tri-Eta pin—half under a ruffle so that they would imagine that it had been there all the time! The Tri-Etas are to have a big opening party very soon. How fortunate that I happened to have the pin. It's only a plain gold one, without setting. Somebody gave it to me years and years—I mean somebody gave it to me; no matter when.

I must have overawed Mr. Sproggs, in the beginning, because he called me "ma'am" and he achieved the break of saying that his brother was an alumnus and wished to be remembered to me! However, that was not malice, but innocence, so I forgave him. His brother's class must have been '90 or '91. I did not stand upon ceremony about it. Before he left (young Sproggs, that is) he was quite at ease, and to make him more so I took the step of calling him "Sprogy," once or twice. That, to him, was very audacious, and it put us upon a good footing. Oh, it's part of the routine. I told him that he must come again, and he said he would. If he thought that he was going to find a "mother" in me I fooled him.

"Tuffy" formally dropped in Sunday afternoon. He usually does. "John-

ny" comes Sunday night and Wednesday night. "Tuffy" and I went walking. He narrated at length about his Summer, which he spent at Johns Hopkins doing special work. I knew that before; only it is his nature to be precise. Now he will talk of something else

Awful lot of pretty Freshmen girls this year. What wouldn't I give to be back where they are! I have a good mind to take a study. It would be fun. I could take—let me see, there must be something that I haven't taken yet. Still, there's no use in needlessly exposing myself to invidious comparisons. I must watch "Sproggy" and "Johnny"; the professor, I think, is safe

Have seen about all my friends. Oh, I have plenty of *friends*. The opening of college is a reunion; commencement is a resurrection! Most of the boys have been to call and many of them have brought Freshmen. It's not (I trust) that I'm one of the sights; but I'm one of the fixtures. Sometimes I feel that I conduct a salon—and that Freshmen are brought to me, first, as they would call on the President—which they don't.

Have started my collection of pins anew. That's easy, at such a time, because of course each fraternity is pleased to have me wearing its badge when the novitiate (actual or prospective) is presented. I perform some lightning changes, after I know "who 'tis."

"Sproggy" has a beauty of a Tri-Eta pin, which I must secure. His mother gave it to him.

"Johnny" and I had a cozy little time last night, in the hammock. We succumbed to the moon, the night being balmy and appealing. I rather like an arm. It is a tie that binds, permitted with discretion; and if "Johnny" understands. He is very sweet when he wishes to be. The

evening was beautifully reminiscent; I now may feel that another college year really has begun. Dear me, what tales that hammock might tell. Patient hammock! Well, "Johnny's" not my first—neither am I his; and I have to amuse him *some way*. We were quite silly.

Nobody asked me to go to the football game, so I went with Mrs. Smith, the fat wife of the mathematics professor. I saw Larry Whitson. Larry and I were so chummy last year at this time. He had a Freshman girl; a stunning damsel. I suppose that is the end of me; as usual.

"Tuffy" has invited me for Forum next Friday night. The Forum is the faculty scientific society. I don't comprehend one word of the papers and the discussions—but I told him that I would be delighted. It is the night of Ethel Barrymore, too. Once I would have declined the Forum, on the chance of the theatre. However, a "bird in the hand," etc.; and "Tuffy" requires encouragement.

I wonder what has become of "Tuffy's" pin. He surely cannot have lost it. I must take him to task. It is a hideous pin, as large as a teaspoon. His father wore it before him, he relates. Some outlandish local fraternity where they both went to school. I've always thought that I *ought* to appropriate it—and I've always shuddered at the dreadful picture of myself with it on. I *could*, though.

No, he says he hasn't lost it—and he blushed. He is such a nervous, blushy man.

"Sproggy" has engaged me for all the Tri-Eta parties this term! Now I call that going some. He seems to think that he has accomplished a feat, by engaging me so. The truth is, I'm only too glad. The Tri-Etas are fine dancers; and last year I was omitted twice!

I must invent a new gown out of some old one. My last year's dimity may be new to "Sproggy," but it's an heirloom to the fraternity. The only alteration that has not happened to it would be the removal of the shoulder-straps—and I can't do *that*. At least, I'd rather not. It is somewhat scandalous, as a dress, already. I could put in a yoke, which would be the other extreme; but why do I sleep during all my spare moments, if not to keep plump? And what's the use in being plump, if not—see?

Anyway, I'll have it cleaned, and I can sew on some lace from that old wrapper I wore last Summer.

The "Willies," the Senior-Junior society, are to have their opening party in two weeks. Their "hoe-downs" are always great fun. One of the girls has asked me if I am going. I said frankly that I hadn't been sufficiently urged; that I was acquainted with very few of the "Willies" this year. Horrid little thing! She knew perfectly. She's a Sophomore, and had her head turned as a Freshman.

I'm going to the "Willies," just the same. Second choice, I'm sure. Man's name is Jones. He called on me once last year. Second choice is better than no choice at all—nowadays. He will have to call again; and perhaps—?

"Sproggy" is a frightful dancer. Two-step and waltz are alike to him; he makes the same motions with his feet. However, I have told him that our steps match exactly. I met that Freshman again—the cute one with his trousers rolled up whom I was talking to when "Johnny" passed, that time. He never has called. I tried to make him promise while we were dancing, and he said he would; but I don't believe he will. He'll have to, if he wants his high-school pin back.

Larry Whitson, I understand, reports that I'm a good sofa-pillow! Decidedly unkind of Larry—not to say

ungentlemanly. Such remarks get around to me very quickly, thanks to solicitous friends. Girls are so obliging to one another! All right, Larry.

I have found it necessary to establish my last year's system of disconnecting the door-bell, afternoons from one till three, for my beauty-sleep. Mama doesn't know.

That little Sophomore cat, Miss Gardner, is doing her best to take my "Johnny" from me! The nerve. But she sha'n't; *no!* I shall hang on to him for dear life. Such a forward minx! I'm quite cross.

The evenings are too cool for the hammock—even though we cuddle close to keep warm. But the couch can be made just as "comfy," and mama never interrupts. I have her trained. She stays upstairs. Poor mama!

"Tuffy" remains my devoted. Still, there's not much real satisfaction in him. He sits up so straight and talks so methodically, and every sensation has to be analyzed before he commits himself. I don't see how I shall bring him to time. He is singularly stupid, that man. I can proffer him an ell and he seems not to know enough to take even the inch; but as for "Johnny"—um-m-m! Hint at that inch and he grabs at the ell. "Tuffy" never has so much as held my hand! Fancy that in a man who has had *his* opportunities.

I've educated so many Freshmen that "Sproggy" presents no special difficulties. I should like to have had that other Freshman of whom I have spoken, though; the cute one with his trousers rolled. He was above the ordinary. He's never come after his high-school pin, and I shall send it to him. Perhaps that will work. But maybe he is "wise," as the boys say. He's much smitten with Nell Lemmon, they say. Heigh-ho!

A great many of the Freshmen boys have had experience with the girls at home, and when they arrive here they think that they know it all. Gracious! They are as clumsy as—grasshoppers! "Sproggy" hasn't the slightest finesse. One time he goes too far, and I must teach him a lesson there, and another time he doesn't go far enough, and—but he's "coming on," as we say of a baby. I shall keep him interested. I'm no silly little high-school girl, he's finding—although I can be silly, on occasion. Luckless "Sproggy"! I have reached the point with him where I may permit him to hold my hand, briefly—unconsciously, you know. He holds it as if it were a priceless egg, and he might break it. I dare assert that eventually we shall gently spoon—and then he will think that he *has* done it! I cannot spoon with him now, for either he would paw me, in a maudlin, high-school fashion, or he would be scared half to death.

The Freshmen entering college certainly are getting younger every year. I never saw such infants. Some of these town boys and girls in this year's class I can remember in kilts! I wish that I couldn't. The day of the second generation draws apace. I couldn't stand that. "Sproggy's" brother is married and has two children.

"Sproggy" has asked if he may not call me "Bessie." I have graciously assented, and he has been emboldened to affection-ize it to "Bess." "Tuffy" calls me "Miss Elizabeth." "Johnny" calls me "Bet." Larry calls me "Lizette"; a dear was Larry, but he is gone. My truly name is Eliza! Fancy! Nobody knows (except mama); or if anybody else does know, it has been forgotten.

Christmas is almost here. I shall give "Sproggy" a protector to be worn with his new dress-suit. It is of white satin, with his monogram embroidered on it. Mama did the embroidering. I'll give "Tuffy" a silk handkerchief, with *his* monogram embroidered on it (by mama); and I'll give "Johnny"

a cigarette-case. I can get one for seventy-five cents, monogram included, and I'll have a three-dollar mark scratched somewhere inside.

"Sproggy" reminds me of his brother so much.

The usual round of dances and card-parties, and church and callers and the Forum with "Tuffy," etc. I believe that I am holding my own.

Nearly everybody went home for Christmas. I slept. "Tuffy" spent the holidays in Baltimore, visiting friends that he made while he was at Johns Hopkins. He sent me an illustrated copy of "Snow-Bound." I don't care for it in the least. Such books are so useless. "Sproggy" sent me a gorgeous locket. "Johnny" sent me a pound box of candy. That's the sum and substance of my gifts, outside the family. Heigh-hum!

The Winter is fitting. "Sproggy" is a splendid skater, as good as any I have ever had. I am pretty good, too, he says. I ought to be. I've skated—well, considerable; and I try to be good at everything that boys like. "Tuffy" cannot skate at all. But he's an assistant professor. "Johnny" won't skate; he's too lazy. Larry was a fine skater. "Muley" Rogers was best of all. I had him last Winter—no, Winter before last. Last Winter Larry took me, but we didn't skate much. Most of the time we just fooled.

I've been laid up for a week. Rheumatism! Anyway, I suspect it is rheumatism. The doctor says "grippe." Mama says that I ought not to skate any more; it is too much for me, being out that way and getting warm and then getting chilled. I never had rheumatism before, I explained; and she actually retorted calmly that I never had been so old before! Poor mama. But I'm doing the best I can. There's not much hope for a girl in a college town. Still, some of them

do marry, although they may have to go away to accomplish it.

The boys have been kind. That is, "Sproggy" has sent me *American Beauties*, and "Tuffy" another book—somebody's essays. "Johnny" has called once. I wouldn't see him. Heavens, Maud! I was looking at my worst and most candid, about that time. Some girls can look so fragile and sweet when sick. I can't—now.

Of course I missed two parties, and I hear that "Johnny" has been skating with Miss Gardner!

The "Willies" gave a dance. I wasn't invited—not even as second choice. This and my rheumatism have made me blue.

This Winter has been rather disastrous. I have told a few things, but the "Willie" party was not the only one which left me out. There have been two others, besides theatres.

"Tuffy" is in Baltimore again. He has only four days between schedules, too. I wonder if Baltimore holds some special attraction. I am cross again. Today I look so faded, and my eyes have wrinkles.

My "Sproggy" is gone! He had typhoid, and is home and will not return. And just as Spring has arrived! I think that's pretty mean, when I need him so.

Strolling season; and the hammock is out and up. "Johnny" and I hung it together, and then we sat in it to test it. "Johnny" enjoys a hammock, but "Tuffy" is one of those men who don't know how to occupy such a thing with another person. He wriggles and shifts and wheezes, and won't relax; and after he has bounced me about he exclaims: "My dear Miss Elizabeth, I fear you aren't comfortable," and he promptly goes and sits on the ground, or on the bench.

"Tuffy" hasn't been near me for two weeks.

Oh, I am heart-broken—and mad as fury. "Tuffy" is *engaged!* To a girl in Baltimore. It is announced, and they are to be married next Fall. He called last Sunday afternoon and I congratulated him. He said he hoped that he might continue our acquaintance, which he highly appreciated; that I had been such a help to him, and that he had told Genevieve (which is her name) about me. He felt sure we would be congenial. Yes, I am mad—and heart-broken. It's always somebody else, in my cases. Yet I try. "Johnny" is left; lazy "Johnny." Between a Senior Law and an assistant professor I don't know but that the Law is the better. I miss "Sproggy" dreadfully. He has written nonsense to me—but he has asked for his pin, which is significant. Heigh-ho! He's only seventeen, and his brother never would allow it, I suspect.

Nothing new, except that I haven't been invited yet to the Commencement Hop; and here it is May. Most of the girls have been engaged, of course. If necessary I can be sick at Commencement time. Nobody knows that I haven't been invited—and nobody shall. I've planned what I shall do in such a crisis. The only thing that I've been engaged for is the Tri-Eta promenade. To be left out of the Commencement dance—the dance—would be shocking. I can't believe it.

No bid to the Commencement Hop yet; but I've been asked to be one of the *patronesses* at the President's reception! I'll have appendicitis first. The idea is an insult. Still—I am on the patroness order. If I'm not married I ought to be; and I *am old*. The President's wife knows. I presume that she intended to compliment me. She's somewhat stupid. However, I have declined.

I won't be chaperon for the Gamma Delta girls, either, on their picnic; not even if I *am* a charter member of the chapter ('88!).

Hammock nights. "Johnny" is very faithful. We talk over all sorts of things, and we have decided that we would like to live in the moon. He kisses me good night—but that does no harm—in June—at Commencement time. He kisses so nicely. We both are practiced, I fancy. Dear "Johnny!" He's my last hope. He isn't going to stay for the Commencement Hop, nor for his Law fraternity banquet. He graduates and leaves right away after. He has a splendid opening in an established law business in Nome, Alaska. I think we will come to a definite understanding before. I dote on Alaska.

"Sproggy" hasn't answered my last letter. But he is impossible, as matters have turned out. His father is to take him to Arizona and put him on a ranch for a year. Arizona would be grand, I believe; but it's only temporary, because after the year he's going to Yale.

"Johnny" is gone. That is all there is to tell—except that I've foolishly cried and reddened my eyes. I was quite fond of him, and his prospects were so good. We sat in the hammock until eleven o'clock, and he left the next morning early. I supposed that of course he would speak—but he even accepted back his fraternity ring which I had been wearing. It's the same old story. I didn't let on, though, and I tried not to act dumbly. I was so bright that he resented it because I did not "feel bad" over his going! He wanted me to weep. But he was spoiled. How *could* I have acted, and retained *any* self-respect? As the last resort I allowed him to walk clear to the side gate with his arm around me (the night was not very light; dusky—you know). He kissed me—on the mouth; and I kissed him back. I couldn't help it. He gave me a little pat on the shoulder and dropped his hand—and I had the sinking feeling at the heart. *The men always go away.* "This is the end, then, Bet," he said. "Such is life. A fellow can't be at college forever. Now for work." "Now for work, Johnny," I

repeated. He said: "So long. Be a good girl"; and I said: "So long. Be a good boy"; and he went off, whistling. I watched him as he passed through the electric light at the corner—and then I ran straight into the house and up to my room, and cried. I wonder if mama heard me. I'm afraid she did. But I've cried before. Such is life: the men go, and I stay.

I must bathe my eyes with camphor, because I serve at the church guild lawn-party tonight.

I didn't have a very good time at the Commencement Hop. I went, finally; but I went with George Loomis. He graduated twenty years ago, and is married. His wife couldn't come, so he was here alone. When he found out that I wasn't going to the hop he insisted that we go together, and I went just to please him—"for the sake of old times," as he delicately (?) put it. I didn't enjoy him, or the party either. He has grown stout, and rather coarse, and he "reminisced" continually, which was anything but tactful. However, as he made no bones of joking about my being a college widow, what could I expect? He grinned over things that I had long forgotten. As he couldn't dance, and I was tired, somehow, we sat in the gallery, nearly the whole programme, and looked on. There was a terrible crush, and so many strangers, and such a lot of imported girls and pretty co-eds. I'm glad that Commencement is over with. I never was glad before.

I'm to be married—to Harry Barnes. But I'm not tacking on an exclamation point. He's a town boy, and we've known each other since we could talk. Our families consider the arrangement a good one, and I suppose it is. I haven't mentioned Harry before; I never thought particularly about him, because I was so used to seeing him. He's been a sort of "Summer beau," for driving and picnics. No, he doesn't belong to any fraternity; he did not even finish high-school. Hasn't a particle of style, and is just a

clerk in a grocery. Only, he's bought a grocery of his own, now, at Northwood, and we'll live there. We'll be married right away—a quiet home affair.

Heigh-hum! It's a solution of the problem. I can't hang on, at the ragged edge, forever, and this takes me out of town, if only eight miles, and saves me from being an old maid. Harry's forty. 'Twill be a relief to let

the wrinkles come, if they want to—and they do. He won't care, and neither shall I. Northwood, as happens, is one place which contains nobody that I—*know*; have known. No man, I mean.

I wonder if the college will miss me. It ought to, surely. Mama might turn over to it my hammock and couch, as an endowment! I've had *my* fun, anyway; and I'm not left—so, there!



ROSES OF A DREAM

THE BALLAD OF A BEACH-COMBER

By Alfred Damon Runyon

A WOMAN'S a scent of perfume; a snatch of a passing song,
And loving a haze of hasheesh for making the brain go wrong;
Dear Christ! But I loved the odor, the music spoke heaven to me—
(Hark! that's the pound of the breakers and the roar of the open sea!)

Somehow I'm thinking of roses—but blessing the coral bar
That sends me the song of the breakers—my thinking might wander too far;
Somehow I'm thinking of roses—and dreaming—and dreaming— Ah, me!
(Hark! there's the throb of the breakers and the sound of the open sea!)

Somehow I'm thinking of roses and scenting a rose perfume;
Oh, this is the Springtime yonder and roses are coming to bloom!
And soon it will be white Summer—but what can it mean to me?—
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Somehow I'm thinking of roses and lights and a lilting song—
(But loving's a haze of hasheesh for making the brain go wrong.)
Of roses of white and crimson—of dusk and a friendly tree—
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Aye, a woman's a scent of perfume, the breath of a fading rose—
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THE OTHER WOMAN

By Arthur Curtis Judd

BURWELL stood irresolutely at the window, looking out on the Park.

When he turned, his wife was still sitting dumbly in her chair, her speechless, red-rimmed eyes leveled on his, her fingers twining and untwining like marsh-grass in a storm.

He walked the length of the room and back, not once looking at her, before he answered. "I won't make any promises."

The same monotonous question repeated itself on her lips: "But why?"

"Why? Because I should feel impelled to break them. Because—" Burwell faced her, exasperated, "Because, once for all, I will not sacrifice one of my friends for any reason so ridiculous. Whether or not you admire Mrs. Carwood is beside the question.

"When I married you, I married you for yourself, and for yourself alone. I did not marry your family, neither did I marry what a melodramaticist might call your 'past.' I took none of your friends into consideration, and I did not intend that you should involve yourself with mine.

"I am as God and an intimate contact with the world have made me: no better and no worse. But there are—" he broke off suddenly. "It might be pertinent to remark that I knew Mrs. Carwood long before I met you," he added, and at once regretted his words.

"I wonder why you married me?" she asked wearily.

"Rubbish!" He made again toward the window, but halted half-way. "Don't imagine for a moment, Agatha, that I take your affectations seriously.

I do not, I assure you. Often, when I fail to come up to your expectations, you adopt a stagey, theatrical pose, and loose upon me the floodgates of a diatribe that must have spent itself long before Medea taunted Jason, or ever Dido burned out her passion in the ashes of her funeral pyre. Don't re-rake cold fires. And please, what little time we have to ourselves, don't shower me with your reproaches, silent or otherwise; they are nothing in the way of a pleasure to anticipate." He turned away almost petulantly. "This makes three times this week this same argument has been rehearsed."

The woman eyed him blankly. "Your memory is better than mine," she said. "I thought this made the fourth."

Burwell saluted ungraciously from his place at the window. "Clever of you! *Your* memory is superior. Of course!"

Silence ensued. Burwell was staring out at the Avenue, all the pent-up aggravations of a month struggling for release; his wife, her hands in her lap, was staring at nothing at all; while the Louis XVI clock ticked monotonously. The silence was broken at last by the maid entering with her tray.

She handed the card to Mrs. Burwell, who looked at it, tore it viciously in two and tossed it back on the salver. The maid withdrew.

"Why wouldn't a divorce suit you?" she pursued.

Burwell smiled indulgently. "Because, my dear, I have not the slightest desire to soil my name, or yours—least of all, Mrs. Carwood's—with the notoriety of the divorce court."

"Unprecedented thoughtfulness!"

"Moreover," he went on glibly, "there are not sufficient grounds."

"Ah! You have investigated?"

"Quite as an amateur, I assure you."

"Doubtless. And you find you shall have to digest my *petites manies* a little longer? Unless—" she had no intention of completing the sentence.

Burwell eyed her suspiciously. "Unless what?"

"*Que sais-je?*" Mrs. Burwell shrugged her shoulders. "I meant nothing whatever. I was merely curious," she added tentatively.

"To discover the extent of my interest? I don't mean to be dull."

His wife looked up from the table, where she was fingering a magazine. "No; I think you rather pride yourself on what you are pleased to call your wit, do you not?"

"As to the extent of your interest," she went on slowly, as if watching the effect of her words, "that I fathomed long ago. When I was younger, what I used to consider your depth appalled me; later I discovered I was sounding too deep. Now, I find the water very shallow."

She leaned toward him, emphasizing her words with the tip of her finger. "The extent of your interest reaches only that pitiable point where any thought, or any word, or any plan of mine interferes in any way with your pleasure."

Burwell smiled. "My dear Agatha, if you had said 'life,' I should agree with you, unqualifiedly. As it is, really, you are making a fool of yourself."

She let her sudden rush of anger cool before she replied; and when she spoke, her words sounded thin and far away, like the "hushing" echo from the sea.

"Isn't it a very little that I am asking?"

Burwell's eyes narrowed. "From your standpoint, doubtless it means little that you should ask me to give up my friends and habits and beliefs, and devote myself unreservedly to you."

"That is where I made my first serious mistake: in marrying a woman

ten years my junior. When you are older, and have seen your ideals, mental and physical, vanish in the casuistry of society; when your womanly romanticism has been stripped of its life and all its color, and there is left you nothing but barren ugliness of reality, possibly you may reach that elastic point, where, to misquote Schiller, you can 'Love and let love.'"

"Yours is preëminently the philosophy of self!"

"No; I merely refuse to sacrifice self. You seem purposely to misunderstand my conceptions!" He hesitated, as though at a loss for an expression. "Try to understand," he broke out finally. "I am working in my life toward a fixed goal, to which everything, yourself included, must be subordinate; there is nothing more important. My habits were settled a dozen years ago, and frankly, once for all, I will not constipate my life to conform to your puritanisms, neither will I fashion my conventions to accommodate the inflexibility of yours. If you had one iota of womanliness—"

"I would listen and endure?"

"Please do not interrupt! If you had the least flame of womanliness in your microcosm, you would show more consideration and, perhaps, less selfishness. You would conceal some of the insignificant cares of your life, to alleviate some of the larger discomforts of mine, without making a virtue of the necessity. Recollect," the sneer in his voice carried even deeper than he intended, "I do not bore you with the intricacies of my affairs, and, in return, I have not the slightest interest in the progress of Mrs. Brown's cold, nor the quantity of china disposed of by your maid. These are details entirely outside my life, and in which you, and you only, are concerned. All this I have told you many times. If I should marry again, I should choose a woman of sufficient tact and intelligence to make my home one of pleasure, instead," he spread his hands impressively, "of what it is."

"In other words," Mrs. Burwell felt her way carefully, step by step, "my life,

in every slightest detail, is to be bound by your peculiarities? I am to throttle all my feelings, all my sensibilities, all my passions and desires, in fine, my whole self, in order that I may not encumber you?"

"I married you—"

"What time you condescend to devote to me, I must hide myself behind the mask of a smile; or be denied that privilege?"

"If you—"

"I am to be no more than the clay from which I was made, to be modeled at your touch? I am to mask with Comus at your command, when my whole self is being crucified? I am to be king's jester, to wabble my cap and bells and toss my scepter for the court's amusement? I tell you, this that we call 'home' is my world and my people, the measure of my life, my Salamis and my Marathon, by which I live and breathe and die. And you ask—"

"When you are finished talking," Burwell interposed placidly, "I have something more to say. Perhaps you thought—"

"Perhaps I thought," she dropped suddenly to her knees and held out her hands imploringly, all her strength and fire weakened and chilled by the utterance of his indifference, "perhaps I thought there might be one spark of love and regard, one littlest flame of affection a-gleam somewhere."

Burwell drew her sharply to her feet. "Really, Agatha, there is no need for this theatricalism. I have never cared for rant. I'd so much rather you'd stand, if you have anything to say."

"Have you no heart?" she asked, a shade of bitterness in her voice.

His retort was in kind. "What an admirable actress was lost in you!" He touched the bell at the *escritoire*.

"What are you ringing for?"

"I am going out."

"Mrs. Carwood has gone to Lakewood," she said quietly.

"Indeed?"

The maid was standing in the doorway.

"At least, that is what I was told at her door."

"Ah, you called? . . . Marie, I shall want Seaver, with the runabout, in fifteen minutes."

The question came again: "Where are you going?"

Burwell was drawing on his gloves. "Where am I going? I am going where I had started when this discussion first came up. I am going, my dear Agatha, to call on Mrs. Carwood; who will bore me with no conventional cant, who will allow me to indulge myself without the introduction of irrelevant interruptions, and who will serve me coffee and cognac, unleavened with stale moralities. To be brief, I am going to give my mind and body a slight respite from my home life, where the tracasseries and other selfishness of my wife I at times find nauseating."

"Is that all you can find to say?" Mrs. Burwell's voice sounded barely above a whisper.

"*Au reste*, I shall not return till late; so do not wait. I do not care for your early morning platitudes."

"Isn't there something else *witty*, you have left unsaid?"

"Yes! I think six months of your unadulterated society would blunt the edges of my wit against all repair. As it is, Mrs. Carwood barely keeps them ground."

When the door slammed, Mrs. Burwell rang for the maid. "Will you show Mrs. Carwood in?" She was at the mirror, arranging her hair, when the other entered.

Mrs. Carwood might have been condemned as over-pretentious, had it not been for various finer subtleties that betrayed her underlying corinthianism. She was slender, more than well-dressed, and appeared the average well-to-do woman of society, despite her over-large mouth and eyes, and wispy yellow hair; Mrs. Burwell, however, could interpret her appearance in but one way.

She did not look up at once, and Mrs. Carwood, almost as if in deference to her silence, waited, while she made a mental inventory of her *mise en scene*.

"I hope you are satisfied," Mrs. Burwell said finally.

"Satisfied, yes!" Mrs. Carwood's voice flared like a lighted torch. "Satisfied that my inductions about you have been verified in every detail."

Mrs. Burwell dropped into her chair, a host of protestations on her lips. "Why—why—I don't understand!"

"No, I didn't think you would!" Mrs. Carwood's words cut like edged steel. "I had no idea you understood, or thought, or knew anything. That much I gathered of my own gleaning. But I had no idea it was as appalling as this. Your whole fault is blindness. Blindness, coupled with an insidious form of selfishness that is gnawing away your vitals. You are not worthy of your husband; no woman ever is! You have no sympathy, no consideration, no insight, nothing, in fact, that would recommend you to a man of his caliber."

Mrs. Burwell had been eager to catch the verdict of her self-imposed judge. Now she rose in her own defense, and the calmness of her voice showed the inbreeding of generations.

"Mrs. Carwood, Mr. Burwell and I have been married for a number of years. Our marriage was the cherished wish of my father. When Mr. Burwell asked me to become his wife, I accepted in the natural course of events, because I had been taught that marriage was the crowning achievement of womanhood."

Mrs. Carwood laughed.

"As to Mr. Burwell himself," Mrs. Burwell went on, "I never questioned my father's opinion. I had been taught to love him, and as the time of our marriage drew near, I felt more and more that I should be able to help him materially in his work. That he has since been more than successful, I can in no way attribute to myself, because the years have shown me that I have fallen far short of his expectations. We have never had any children. . . . but I have known that I should grow to love him, as I do now."

The last words ended almost in a whisper. She had unbared her creed

of good and evil, of right and wrong. No Samurai ever bared himself more willingly before the altar of his ancestors.

Mrs. Carwood startled her from her self-immolation.

"And this is your idea of marriage? Well; it only points the moral of the hollowness of all this materialism we have built up about us, and which we have dignified with the name 'Society.' Tested to the ultimate, what does it show? A fracture on its most beautiful surface, where the wearing down of the ages has smoothed and polished, while we have stood by and lauded its god-like perfection."

She walked to the window and back.

"You don't know what it is to love a man! To be always at his side, day by day, year after year; not struggling so far ahead that he feels the drawing of the traces, and not lagging so far behind that he must slacken his pace to meet yours. Ah, there's the bigness of love! To be all the world to a man, to know that every hour of the day he needs you and wants you! Mrs. Burwell, time after time your husband has come to be like some muddled canvas, that must be scraped clean before we add another line."

No Magaera could have voided her spleen in more unerring aim, and the poison left Mrs. Burwell sobbing, "Oh! You have no right! You have no right!"

"Exactly! So the world and my better nature acquaint me. No church has given me the right; but I have taken it upon myself, as a thousand other women have done before me, because of its crying need; a need you were never born to satisfy, except in a manner that is as revolting as it is necessary. Selfishness—there's your weakest point. You believe—as how many other women have believed!—that man was made to serve woman. But I tell you that is the whitest lie of all the miserable catechism. We do the serving, whether we say the words or not. We beg the crumbs; and bless him for the little he gives, and forgive him for the much he denies. That is

woman's greatest gift—forgiveness. And surely it is the readiest we can bestow on man!"

Mrs. Burwell raised her eyes to the other's face.

"And so, assured that you are blessed with these multitudinous virtues, you have deliberately set yourself to see of how much of my husband you could rob me! And you taunt me with my selfishness and my unfitness to be his wife, and beneath it all, you wonder why instead he did not marry you?"

The arrow fell wide. "Nothing of the kind!" cried Mrs. Carwood. "Mr. Burwell knows as little of my real self, as do you. I have but one claim, that of friendship, on your husband. But that claim is stronger than any you hold."

"Why *didn't* you marry Mr. Burwell?" insisted his wife.

Mrs. Carwood held out her hands in mute protest. "What! Disillusion him for life; and so lose my best friend! *À quel bon?* That's what you have done, Mrs. Burwell. Ten years from now you will be the same woman you are today. You've let him handle and maul you until he knows your words and the tones of your voice even before your thought crystalizes. How well do you know him? I know how little you know him!"

"Mrs. Carwood! Please!" Mrs. Burwell rose wearily. "There is no need for all this vindictiveness. I am quite aware that I have not been all that a husband demands. Frankly, I lack your experience. Neither can I be other than myself. I am not so complicated. I admit the barrenness of my mentality; I grant you my ideas are, some of them, iron-bound; nevertheless, I shall stand by them."

"And become a model heroine?"

"Not in any sense of the word. I intend to live my own life in my own way."

"In spite of your husband?"

Mrs. Burwell did not answer at once, and Mrs. Carwood broke out, "You *are* a fool!"

Mrs. Burwell's smile was blinding. "So my husband tells me. Were I weak-minded, I should, of necessity, believe two such friends." She went on more slowly. "May I remind you, Mrs. Carwood, that you came here on your own invitation, in order that I make a scene between my husband and myself? Doubtless you had your motives, and doubtless, it has not occurred to you that I had mine as well; else I should never have acquiesced in anything so preposterous. Whether we have each been successful, is beside the point; and that point I refuse to discuss any further."

"Haven't we all had quite enough of this?" At the sound of her husband's voice, Mrs. Burwell sank helplessly into a chair. Mrs. Carwood was smiling a little bitterly to herself.

"I—I—when did you get back?" Mrs. Burwell was trembling.

"My dear Agatha, I have not yet gone. I was curious. Let me explain. As I stood at the window, some time ago, the reflection showed me that Marie brought you a card, and in glancing toward the hall, I noticed Mrs. Carwood standing there. I repeat, I was curious. So, as I was leaving, not seeing Mrs. Carwood, I slammed the door and dropped behind one of the hangings."

"And you heard all that I said?"

"And understood a great deal more." His eyes narrowed as he gazed at her.

Mrs. Carwood was standing at the door, her fingers holding the curtain. "You see, dear Mrs. Burwell, I *saw* him hide behind the portières. That's why I stayed. Good night."

Mrs. Burwell wiped the tears from her eyes.



"FROST says his life is an open book."
"Yes, but the leaves are not cut."

APRIL RAIN

(ON THE RIVIERA)

By Martha Gilbert Dickinson Bianchi

THE April rain slants southward
Across a silver sea,
The burden of its murmur
A tropic threnody.

It dallies in the vineyards,
The orange scents pursue;
It wanders 'mid the olives
Where hyacinths are blue,
It lingers in the almond-trees
To flush them hues of dawn,
The jasmine dreams her lover
Has errant come—and gone.

It nestles with the violets—
In every footfall free
A vague beloved presentiment
Of immortality;
Where'er it lists to wander,
Forever in my heart
It falls upon a far sweet grave
To bid the flowers start.

Summon the light anemone,
Thy fragile beauties all,
Those pale attendants of the dusk
That wait upon thy call!
Bid them come forth in victory,
Their ghostly fragrance fling
To cheer the mortal dust beneath—
Thou Gabriel of Spring!

Go, April rain, sing seaward—
Beyond the barren wave
Thy gentler destination—
A far, sweet hillside grave.

MRS. MORLEY'S GUESTS

By R. K. Weekes

"CAPTAIN WYNDHAM-KER," said the maid, announcing.

It was close upon eight o'clock, and Mrs. Morley was making use of the few minutes before dinner to write a note; she was not expecting any caller at that time, least of all Captain Wyndham-Ker, whom she had last seen on the occasion of his marriage six weeks before. She turned half-round without rising, and unceremoniously held out her left hand.

"Oh, Wynd, how unexpected you are! Sit down for a minute while I finish this, there's a dear boy. I'll come and play with you presently," she drawled in her lazy way, and turned back to her writing; and while Wyndham stretched out his long legs before the fire, she recaptured her composure and pretended to finish her letter.

"There, that's done! How are you, my dear boy?"

"Very fit, thanks."

"I didn't know you were back."

"We only arrived on Tuesday."

"And ran down to see us first thing? Most self-sacrificin' of you—shows you don't forget old friends. And how's Phyllis?"

"Phyllis is very fit, too. How is Morley?"

"Sounds like a German grammar book, doesn't it?" said Mrs. Morley. "Tommy's not very well, I'm sorry to say; he's had dyspepsia lately, and these east winds have brought back his asthma—yes, he's very sorry for himself. He's gone to a meetin' tonight at Salisbury Hall; he belongs to the Protestant Defence League, and subscribes so freely that there's nothin'

left to pay the bills with—we owe all the tradespeople—quite frightful. Poor Tommy! I'm goin' over to Rome."

"Oh, Morley's in town, is he? What time do you expect him back?"

"I don't exactly know," said Ethel with bland deliberation.

Wyndham's dark eyes laughed rather wickedly. "You know very well he isn't coming back till tomorrow," he said. "You don't tell fibs as well as you used to, Ethel—or perhaps I understand you better."

Mrs. Morley rose and stood before the fire, arching her pretty foot upon the tiles; she was not visibly disconcerted. "I thought I might make him an excuse for not askin' you to dine," she said negligently. "Fact is, I don't want you tonight."

Wyndham rose, too, and stood beside her. "Then you will put me to the pains of asking myself," said he, smiling down with merciless observation. "Why don't you want me tonight?"

Ethel made the first excuse that came into her head. "The maids have all had influenza, and you're such a late stayer—keeps them up so."

"Send them to bed, then, and I'll let myself out."

Ethel raised her head with a start. "Dinner is ready, ma'am," said the maid at the door.

The Morleys lived in the depths of the country, forty miles from town, and kept only maidservants; they were not well off. The dinner was cheap and the conversation dull, for Ethel Morley's rather piquant tongue seemed to have lost its sting; but, though Wyndham was a fastidious man, tonight he did not care. His entertainment was

to watch Ethel's face; a sallow, clever, satirical face, with beautiful dark hair and beautiful eyes which knew the meaning of trouble. She was several years older than Wyndham, and she looked it; there were lines on her forehead and white hairs above her temples. Wyndham fancied that she had grown older even in the six weeks of his absence, and that pleased him.

Ethel found him also changed. She had known him for twelve years, ever since her marriage with Colonel Morley had brought her acquainted with the young subalterns in his regiment, and she had always said that Wyndham Wyndham-Ker was the handsomest Y. O. she had ever known. He was not less handsome now, but he was no longer a Y. O.; and she found it increasingly hard to keep up the habit of kind maternal friendship which she had chosen for her attitude. A boy of eighteen looks up to his Colonel's wife, but a man of thirty does not look up to a woman of thirty-five. Ethel found herself making excuses to keep the maid in the drawing-room after dinner; and when at last the girl withdrew, and she was left alone with her visitor, she felt in secret ill at ease.

"You haven't asked me how I get on as a married man," said Wyndham, breaking a silence which had lasted too long for comfort.

"Seemed superfluous," said Ethel, "you're so obviously radiant. How do you, though?"

He laughed. "You advised me to marry, and your judgment was as sound then as it is now."

"Phyllis is so sweet," murmured Ethel.

"She is. Do you like chocolate creams? I prefer caviare."

"If you're goin' to talk riddles, I shall go to bed. Go and play something nice and soothin', there's a dear boy."

"I don't want to play tonight, I want to talk to you." He sat down behind the sofa, where he could see her, but she could not see him. Ethel did not like this; she twisted round, but still he was behind her, and she would

not acknowledge her uneasiness by changing her seat. "You did urge me to marry, didn't you?" he said.

"I told you it was time you were settled."

"I assure you I have been very nearly settled."

"Have you? How interestin'!"

"You ought to remember what it's like and be able to sympathize," said Wyndham. "I bet I sha'n't have forgotten my feelings in twelve years' time; and it's popularly supposed to be worse for a woman than for a man."

"More riddles!" Ethel picked up her white Persian kitten and pulled her soft tail. "We don't know what he means, do we, Polly Jones?— No, thanks, I don't want any explanations. I wish you'd go and play Schumann. You're quite divine when you're playin' Schumann, and you're really rather dull when you're talkin' to me."

"I'm talking about unhappy marriages."

"Abstract subjects always bore me."

"I am talking about your unhappy marriage and mine."

"My marriage is perfectly happy, thanks. And yours—well, I really don't wish to hear any more about it."

"I'm sorry, but you've got to, because you're responsible for it."

"My dear boy, if you go on like this I shall have to send you away."

"I should never have married at all, if you hadn't urged me to; and I shouldn't have chosen Phyllis, if you hadn't thrown her at my head. Ring the bell by all means, if you like. Which are you going to ask Mary Jane to remove—me, or the coffee cups?"

Ethel took her hand away from the bell and was silent for a minute. It seemed that she could not go on fencing; she must touch the difficult subject: how was she to do it? She elected to be grave and gentle.

"I didn't want to talk of it," she said, "because I think your marriage is a subject that you should not discuss with any friend, however intimate; but if you must, you must. Which do you mean that you repent of? Marriage with Phyllis, or marriage at all?"

"Both."

"But, Wyndham dear, I don't know what more you can want. Phyllis is a sweet girl, and she loves you devotedly."

"I wish to heaven she didn't."

"Don't you think you are rather unreasonable?"

"Unreasonable! I'm bored—bored to distraction. All you say is quite true. Phyllis is a sweet girl, sweet as treacle; and she loves me with effusion. Seven times a day do I have to kiss her fervently, and she's wounded if I don't. Wounded! I could bear it if she slanged me, but on the contrary, she warms my slippers." He laughed. "She's Early Victorian in mind as well as in looks. She's afraid of satirical persons—doesn't love you, by the way, Ethel; she gets on a chair if she sees a mouse; she screams if the car goes ten miles an hour. She thinks home is the woman's sphere; she never reads a newspaper; she considers it her duty to agree with every opinion I express. Good heavens! how sick I am of being agreed with! But I could stand it all by dint of keeping out of her way as much as possible, if it weren't for you."

"Well, why did you marry her? I only advised you for your good, and you needn't have agreed with me; you don't generally."

"I don't agree with what you say, I do with what you think. I wish I had on this occasion, for in your heart you know you didn't want me to marry."

"I did."

Wyndham laughed. "You didn't, because you wanted me yourself."

"Now you *shall* go," said Ethel resolutely.

"I can't," said Wyndham, "there's been an accident on the line, and it won't be clear for hours. The smash was just this side of Carsbury, and I had to walk from there; that's why I was so late."

"You weren't in the accident?"

"Yes, I was; there were two killed in my carriage. The man next to me had the top of his head sliced off and shrieked for half-an-hour. My coat was soaked; I thought you'd notice it at dinner—don't faint."

Ethel was in truth exceedingly white, beyond all hope of concealment. "What an extraordinary boy you are," she said as soon as she could command her voice. "To be in an accident like that, and not think it worth mentioning. Your nerves must be made of iron."

"I saved it up purposely to see the effect on you. I'm quite satisfied with my experiment, thanks."

"Phyllis will be anxious," said Ethel.

"No, I wired her from Carsbury, and told her I couldn't get back. She knew I was coming down here; I said I had some business to talk over with the Colonel. I arranged to come as soon as I saw he was to speak at Salisbury Hall."

"You knew Tom would be away tonight?"

"Of course; it was announced in the *Times* yesterday. That was why I came. But I didn't count on the accident; that was a piece of sheer luck."

Ethel's head was spinning so that she dared not trust herself to speak. She could feel that Wyndham was still watching her mercilessly.

"So as I can't possibly get back tonight, I'm afraid I shall have to ask you to put me up."

"I can't."

"Why not?"

"There's no room ready and no one to prepare it."

"I don't care," he said with a laugh.

"I don't want you, Wyndham."

"You mean you want me too much."

Ethel covered her face with her hands.

"You know you love me, Ethel."

"Oh! Wynd, be merciful!"

"I won't. You owe me this, to pay for my marriage. Ethel, Ethel!" his voice was close to her ear. "I've stood it all these years. I never said a word. I married, solely because you decreed it—and it's all been a hideous mistake. You'll come away with me tomorrow?"

She dropped her hands and threw back her head, looking upward. Wyndham was leaning over the end of the sofa; as she moved, his hand fell on her arm, thrown out along the couch, and closed round the warm, white softness of

its curve. He bent down, looking into the troubled darkness of her eyes, defenseless now; a pulse beat quickly in her temple, her color rose, her lips parted to entreat his mercy once again—he kissed her. Ethel threw up her hand in blind protest, he caught and mastered the struggling fingers, until they relaxed; her eyes shut; for that moment she was wholly his.

Before either had time to speak or move, a bell pealed loudly in the empty hall. Ethel started up, a hand at her heart. "It's Tom, I know his ring! Oh, what shall I do?"

"He'd have his latch key!"

"No, he wouldn't, the door's bolted. I must go and open it, there's no one else." Her fingers shook as she tried to smooth her hair. Wyndham laid his hand on them. "Steady, darling; there's nothing to be afraid of. Morley knows I've been here scores of times before."

"There's conscience to be afraid of. You've none, I know, but I have, and I don't know how to face—he's ringing again! I mustn't keep him waiting."

In the hall the gas was burning, turned low. "All right, I'm just coming," Ethel called cheerfully through the panels, but she could scarcely steady her hands to unloop the chain. Wyndham, reaching above her head, shot back the bolts and took the latch from her hand to open the door. A gust of fresh, chill-scented wind swept in, making the light flicker—what was this little figure on the doorstep?

"I'm so sorry," said a fresh young voice, "but *is* Wyndham here by any chance? I heard of the accident, and I made sure he'd come to you, as Carsburg's so close."

"Phyllis!"

"Oh, you *are* there!" said Mrs. Wyndham-Ker, stepping into the hall; a slight, childish figure wrapped in a long cloak, with a hood over her head. "I couldn't rest at home when I heard of the accident, so I motored down to see for myself. I was afraid you might have come to some harm that you didn't mention in your telegram."

"Who drove you? Roberts?"

"No, Roberts had gone home, and I couldn't wait; so I drove myself."

"You must be perished," Ethel interposed in her well-bred, languid drawl. "Do come in to the fire, won't you? How brave of you to come down all by yourself in the dark! I should have been in hysterics the whole way."

"I was too anxious about Wyndham to think about anything," the girl said, following her into the drawing-room. She spoke over her shoulder to her husband, "Oh, Wyndham, darling, the car wants some more water, by the way; and will you just see to the acetylene lamps before we start back? I know Mrs. Morley won't mind, as she is such an old friend!"

She had thrown off her cloak, and was warming her hands at the fire. Evidently she had started in a hurry; she was wearing a white lace dinner-dress, with a multitude of baby frills and diamond droplets sparkling here and there. Her pretty golden hair was parted and brought rippling down over her ears to a knot in the nape of her neck; her little oval face, blue eyes and rose-bud mouth were like some Early Victorian portrait in their innocence and charm. Ethel Morley was in black. Phyllis looked straight into her eyes and smiled. "What a terrible night for Colonel Morley!" she said. "I do hope he won't make his asthma worse by speaking."

"Who told you that he was speaking?"

"Why, I saw it in the paper; it's no secret, is it?" She paused, and then added, still brightly smiling: "I did think it rather strange at first that Wyndham should have an appointment with Colonel Morley down here at the very hour when he was announced to speak at Salesburg Hall; but I quite understand it now!"

Ethel turned away; she could not meet her eyes, and showed it plainly.

"You arranged it all very well, didn't you?" said Phyllis, her voice shaking.

Ethel did not speak.

"Only I wasn't quite such a fool as you counted on. I knew I was right. I knew he meant to be with you. I'm

glad I came—oh, very glad!" Her little fingers clenched and unclenched upon the mantelpiece; she was shaking with fury. Ethel turned on her suddenly, put her hands on her shoulders, and faced her under the lamp. Little Phyllis, her blue eyes militant, gave her look for look.

"Do you love him?" said Ethel.

"I'm not going to let you have him!"

"Yes; you do love him," said Ethel.

... "You're very pretty, very. Wynd loves pretty things. Hold your own; scold him; never let him have all he wants—that's the way to manage Wyndham... Oh, you're sweet, you're just as pretty as Dresden china; and dimpled like a baby! The game's in your hands, child; you'll soon make him forget me. Twenty, aren't you? And I'm thirty-five."

"How dare you talk to me like this?"

"When one's fond of a person, one wants to see him happy; don't you know that? That's why I made Wynd marry you. I thought you had the stuff in you to hold him; and you have; and you know how to use it now."

"You *made* him marry me!"

In a whirlwind of wrath, Phyllis caught up her cloak and swept out of the room. "Wyndham! where are

you? Are you never coming? I wish I'd brought Roberts, he would have done it long ago, while you were fumbling!"

"The car's ready," said Wyndham shortly; and he looked above her head at Ethel. The slightest signal would have kept him there; but Ethel very quietly shook her head. "Good night, Mrs. Morley. I'll see you again—tomorrow."

"Tomorrow I am going abroad for good," said Ethel in a low voice. Wyndham did not hear her, because he was starting the car; indeed, he was not meant to hear her. The words were for Phyllis, who was already in her seat; she started and shot a wondering, questioning glance at Ethel, but there was no time for more—they were off.

Ethel went back to the drawing-room. The kitten was playing with Wyndham's handkerchief, which he had dropped on the floor; Ethel snatched it up and kissed it, dropped her forehead on the mantelpiece and stood so many minutes. Then she laughed, and stood erect and threw the handkerchief away on the table.

"And still," she said, "thank God she came!"



THE WIND MAIDEN

By Arthur Guiterman

HER lips, like roses empearled,
Gave forth a rill of laughter;
She brought the joy of the world—
Of this, and that hereafter.

So free that magical art
Would scarce avail to bind her,
She danced right into my heart
And locked the door behind her!

PRESENT COMPANY ALWAYS EXCEPTED

ALL of us recall the old story—those of us at least who “have time for Dickens”—of the gentleman of business who blamed all his harsh measures on a mysterious and more or less invisible partner. “I would be glad to raise your salary, but Mr. Jorkins won’t hear of it. He is a very hard man.” “I cannot agree to do this, dearly as I should like to, because Mr. Jorkins absolutely refuses to consent.”

The same situation in my humble opinion obtains today, with the editors of magazines as the soft-hearted gentleman—who continually regrets, and the public as the unbending partner. I have been for a long time interested in proving the soundness of the claims put forward by editors as to the absolute, unshakable, insistent desires of the multitude, and I have gone about collecting opinions on the subject with a determined Rosa Dartle thirst for information that has made me a public nuisance.

The curious part of it all is that among the hundreds of suffering folk who have endured my questions and answered them kindly enough, I have never yet found one who voiced the opinions so sweepingly ascribed to them. Not one has acknowledged that should he read in a magazine a story which “ended badly” as the schoolgirls say, then and there he would cancel his subscription to the monthly. “I don’t care,” they all say, “if the ending is sad, so long as it logically must be so. Let the story be interesting and convincing. It is not my funeral, is it?”

One even went so far as to admit that when a tale began in this wise, “‘And what did you say then?’ laughed Doris, as she handed me the cup of tea her pretty white hands had prepared”

—he groaned and turned to “Tristram Shandy.” The tea-table type of story, the house-party type of story, full of biscuit and carefully embroidered gowns, boutonnieres and butlers, with nothing more violent than a well-bred desire on the part of the frock-coated hero to touch the marceled waves of auburn hair that cover the shell-like ears of the bewitching Doris—who hasn’t read scores of them and who ever cared? Yet one could write twenty-four every year and sell them all.

“Our public likes them,” says Mr. Editor, sitting in his sanctum, too far away from the long-suffering public to hear the groan of weariness.

For a time the starved readers—man cannot live on afternoon tea alone—were driven to taking to raw meat. They gorged themselves on tales of men and wolves, where the principal interest was centred in the conundrum which will eat which. I saw, during this reign of terror, an advertisement which claimed that such and such a story about to appear was “full of red blood and viscera.” But the stomach revolted at last from a continuation of such fare, and the poor public wandered away from the abattoir and stared with a dull eye upon the tea-table again. Of the medium between these two extremes, not always a happy one, perhaps, but a real living actuality nevertheless, they must never hear a word. Of the solid sins and weaknesses and complications and tragedies of life the editors’ Sunday school class must be spared a mention.

Recently the manuscript of a story was returned to me with this remarkable reason for its rejection: “The story is too timely and we do not feel justified in giving it to our readers.” Does that mean anything to the mortal mind?

Because it dealt with a financial situation of which all men were talking and in which the interest of the whole country was centred, the story could not be allowed to pass into the hands of the public!

I should like some day to write a little article on "letters I have had from editors," except for the fact that many of them I count among my friends and I should not be willing to show them in so unfavorable a light. One letter, I may mention, to a friend of mine, rejecting a story, from one of the oldest and best known magazines in the country, gave as the reason that the story was "a little somber" and the — was "committed to a policy of adding to the gaiety of nations." I took up the current issue of that magazine and found within its august covers reminiscences of the Civil War; an article on aoudads or some such creature with tiresome horns photographed in every variety of position; a short biography of Lincoln's sear life; a story about a New England woman, deserted but faithful, who continued to sew on her trousseau until she died of consumption and was buried in her wedding-dress; a treatise on the cure of cancer; another short story, Civil War again, with a widowed sweetheart and bereaved mother clasped in one another's arms over a flag-wrapped coffin at the end; an article on teaching the dumb to talk with their fingers; and a dull monologue in feeble imitation of Beatrice Herford. Then I read the letter again about the gaiety of nations, and wondered what would cure a headache.

Not very long since one of the wittiest authors we have was talking to me on this very subject. "There isn't one of us," he said, "who hasn't a score of stories in his head better than any he has ever written, that he knows will never be written because nobody will print them—not obscenity, not disgusting immorality, but just straight-out-from-the-shoulder stories about real things." We want to write them, all the many people I have asked are hungry to read them, but the editors keep their cotton in their ears and their green

shades over their eyes, and say, "Not while we have our strength."

There is another peculiar habit of these authorities. "This is a splendid story," one will say, "but it is too long for our needs. Cut out 100 thousand words and we will take it." Humble author looks it over. He can't cut out the principal characters, the important incidents, the necessary speeches. Consequently out come all the quaint thoughts that the tale has conjured up, all the fresh conceits and charm that he has woven in and out of his tale-telling. The story as a piece of literature is now worth *absolutely nothing*, but it is of orthodox length, is accepted and published. Cinderella's sisters cut off their heels and toes to get their pedal extremities into a certain slipper, but it is doubtful if any artist would have cared to use the aforesaid feet afterward as models of beauty. Is it the public that prefers these mutilated remains? Tell it to another of your own guild, Mr. Editor. He may believe you.

They buy their material by the inch, I verily believe. "Let me see," says Mr. Editor, "we must have two stanzas for the bottom of this page. Have we anything that will fit?" Mr. Associate takes out his tape-measure and goes over the stock. "Here is one that will do," he says. "It is not very good stuff, but it is just the right size." So in it goes. "Pity not to take this story," says one of the readers, "it's the best story we have had submitted in years." "It is good," says Mr. Editor, "but we have never published a story of just that length, you see."

Heaven forbid that it should ever come to pass, but were I the power behind some such publication, I would come out in my March issue, as I chose, and say, "The April issue will contain nothing except one story. It was such a good tale that we just had to take it, even though it will occupy the entire magazine. Don't buy the April issue if you don't care to read it." The bookstalls on the night before publication would look like a failing bank. I, for one, would take

my camp-stool and sit up all night for the chance to buy that magazine, and I am not *sui generis*. My friends, the editors, would smile at this if any of them read it—but they won't. Exaggeration is a spice in life. But there is much truth behind it.

We who pride ourselves as a nation upon our advancement, have nothing to boast about in the superiority of our magazines as compared with foreign production, except, perhaps, in the artistic expensiveness of that better half of our monthlies devoted to advertisement. The censorship in England we cavil at as an outrageous check upon free speech, but it is as nothing compared to the censorship of our own editors. It has become a bromidiom that everything may go into our newspapers and nothing into our magazines, and which is the greater evil it would be hard to say. Nothing is more absurd than the contention of Mr. Editor that his magazine is going to the homes of the people where all children who run may read. That the newspaper will lie beside it is too obvious to mention. But the fact is that children are not injured in the least by an artist's presentation of truth, no matter with what subject he may deal. A bald report of adultery and murder in a newspaper is one thing, and a masterful story of the tragic side of sin is another. I know of what I speak, for as a child I was allowed the use of my father's library nor was there one forbidden tree in the garden. I had, by the way, my first lesson in reading from "The School for Scandal." As I became, in a reasonable time after this beginning, an omnivorous reader, I made an exhaustive use of my privilege. There were many, many things in the books I read that I could not understand, as for example, how the inhabitants of Roaring Camp knew the poor mother of "Luck" was going to be very ill and perhaps die, but all these things passed me by utterly blankly, as might an interjected passage of Greek. Children have a natural simplicity that comes of their uncomplicated lives, and are not injured by the things they do not under-

stand. And also I have yet to see this army of children to which the editors tenderly refer, staying in from coasting and prisoner's base to read the desiccated pages of reminiscences and biographies that are considered best for them. Safely may their magazines be left in the drawing-room, safely, safely. But what of the poor adult reader who no longer cares for prisoner's base and jack stones? Is there to be no consideration shown him? Is he always to be driven to "Tristram Shandy" for a breath of life? An extreme instance, to be sure, but what one of us has not turned the pages of a magazine without finding anything we cared to read, or has not seen some other wearied searcher for refreshment drop his hopefully purchased volume into the aisle of the car and yawn and stare out of window. I do not doubt that many of the readers contend that the fault lies in there being "no good stories written nowadays." They are not brought into personal contact with this rank of picked men who stand between the reader and the writer and they do not realize we are as thoroughly disgusted as they. For not one little page can be smuggled across the barrier, without the sanction of this picket guard.

If you buy a copy of the "Golden Fleece" you may know that you are getting an evidence of what Mr. Jason likes in the way of stories and verses. You may not care for his taste, but that makes no difference. He will never read a story and say, "This is well written. It does not appeal to me personally, but—there are many hundred readers and possibly some of them will enjoy it."

Not at all. "I don't like it," says Mr. Jason, and the public never gets a chance to say whether it does or no. These things are done differently in other quarters of the globe. One of the cleverest and most successful and most admirable of publications is managed in a far different way. There is no Mr. Jason here. The men who produce the material for this magazine meet together, and the make-up man receives his orders. "I have sent in a five-thou-

sand-word story," says one, "and — has done two full-page drawings for it." Number two has such and such poems to offer, Number three his contribution, and so on. The make-up man arranges the material to the best of his ability and the public gets it and is very glad to get it, too. They are getting sincere, worthy, valuable work, amusing or sad or enlightening—whatever it may be, and not first passed through a colander of some *one* man's prejudices and habits. The success of the method speaks for itself. I do not believe that public to be any more advanced than our own, nor do I believe them to be depraved by being permitted to see the unchallenged work of an eager artist. They are getting the very best out of their writers and painters and poets, the spontaneous thing, the sincere thing—not the thing we are practically forced under our conditions to do if we want a hearing at all, bound and half-gagged by the traditions of each individual sanctum.

It is uphill work at times, but I for one want to say that I have faith in the public. I don't believe the people of today are the milk-sopping molly-coddles that editors seem to think them. And I have a hope that one of these days some sane business man who wants to make a fortune will start a real magazine, and say to the authors and the readers, "Now get together. What is the demand and what is the supply? I want the best writers in the world, and I want them to write the kind of stories they want to write. They don't have to please me. They don't have to be of any prescribed length. Say what you have got to say and then stop, whether it is one or thirteen thousand words. If there are people in the country who are interested to know what you consider worth writing, now is their chance to find out." It will be a sad day for all the other magazines, to be sure, and it is with no unkindly feeling, however, that I add, "God speed it."



THE PILGRIMS

By Arthur Ketchum

LOVE let go the hand of Faith,
 (Love whom God made blind!)
 Fain to fare another way,
 Other guides to find!

Late and late I heard Love cry,
 Lost on fields of Pain,
 Stumbling through a darkened day
 To Faith's hand again.



HIS OBSTINACY

MISS LINGERLONG—You have been a widower for ten years, haven't you, Mr. Flint?

MR. FLINT—Yes, and I am just as persistent in it as I ever was, thank you!

UN MERLE

Par Leon Lafage

SAUTOUL, un soir de grêle, trouva ce merle dans les prés. L'oiseau avait une aile un peu faussée; il était noir comme il est d'usage dans son espèce. Le noir, dit Banville, est distingué:

C'est propre, c'est gentil, c'est gai;
C'est l'uniforme des notaires.

Le merle vit bien Sautoul, dont les larges foulées écrasaient le regain, et il tenta de se dérober au regard et à la prise; hélas! la patte du paysan fit de l'ombre sur les yeux de l'oiseau. "Me voilà engagé," pensa le merle, mais il n'en dit rien.

— Jolie bête, demanda l'homme, sais-tu siffler?... Nenni?... Nous te ferons la classe!

Et il l'emporta chez lui.

Je vous assure que la maison de Sautoul était d'aspect comique. Un merle ne devait pas s'y ennuyer. Elle était petite et pointue comme une lanterne de village. On peut la voir encore dans la combe du Verd. Coiffée de tuiles brunâtres que liait un crépi de mousses, elle montrait un air goguenard et rusé, parce qu'elle était borgne. Son premier et unique étage, en effet, ne regardait la vigne que par une fenestrelle ouverte sur la droite. Puis, tout là-haut, au lieu d'un bel épi de toiture en faïence vernie ou d'une girouette en oriflamme, comme chez les voisins de la Barthe, on apercevait une grosse bouteille de verre noir—noir comme un merle—percée à la base d'un trou de sifflet. Et c'était merveille quand venait septembre.

L'autan avait beau faire des folies sur les routes avec tout l'or volé aux peupliers, il ne passait jamais par là

sans monter jouer un air dans la bouteille de Sautoul. Il y allait, parfois, de toute une chanson. Le premier couplet rappelait le bref hullement des chouettes; le second, le cri prolongé des grands-ducs; le troisième, le miaulement affolé des chats lorsque de mauvais garnements leur pincement la queue dans un éclat de bois vert ou les bottent avec des noix engluées de poix fraîche.

Sautoul se déclarait content de sa maison. L'avait-il bâtie lui-même? On ne sait; mais, borgne comme lui, elle lui ressemblait. J'ai toujours cru qu'il l'avait faite à son image: Sautoul, qui ne manquait ni de jugement, ni de coquetterie, ne se fût pas crevé un œil, même le gauche, pour ressembler à sa maison.

On y trouvait de tout, dans ce logis, car Sautoul était pauvre. Or, un vrai pauvre ne possède point dans ses nuances le sentiment de la propriété... Vin de race, huile de noix plus rousse que les filles du Causse, citrouilles semblables à des lunes d'automne, raisins noirs pendus aux poutres comme des rats, on y trouvait de tout, chez ce brave Sautoul, de tout, jusqu'à une vieille cage aux barreaux d'osier qui avait servi pour la chanterelle. Le merle, encore jeunet, s'en accommoda. De lui-même il expropria les araignées et déchira leurs nippes. Puis, joyeux de la besogne faite, il jeta deux ou trois notes flûtées comme s'il eût été dans le taillis. Sautoul se mit à lui siffler lentement, avec application: *J'ai du bon tabac dans ma tabatière*, qui est, pour ainsi parler, l'air national des merles de France. L'oiseau leva le bec,—un bec frais et poli comme une graine,—pen-

cha la tête, regardant Sautoul tantôt d'un œil, tantôt de l'autre. Et le soir, quand il fut seul, on l'entendit qui s'essayait à répéter la chanson. Alors Sautoul lui acheta un miroir de deux sous, car les merles, comme les hommes, ont besoin d'illusion et d'amitié.

Au bout de trois semaines, l'oiseau sifflait mieux qu'un braconnier. On lui ouvrit la cage: il sautilla de la table à la huche, de la huche au dressoir; l'exercice lui rendit le jeu de son aile et peu à peu il se priva.

Mais Sautoul bientôt, ne goûta plus l'agrément de cette compagnie et, pour tout dire, il regretta d'avoir enseigné à son merle: *J'ai du bon tabac...* L'oiseau devenait assourdissant, entonnait l'air à tout propos pour le laisser en suspens, précipitait la mesure, ajoutait des variations où se reconnaissaient, avec les modulations de la bouteille, les quatre notes d'un pic qu'on voyait, chaque jour, grimper le long d'un noyer, grave et la tête en arrière devant l'écorce, comme le chantre du bourg devant l'antiphonier.

Un mois durant, ce merle avait diverti Sautoul de ses pensées. Le pauvre diable était "tombé amoureux" d'une femme de son âge,—la Crubélette,—souvent mal coiffée, toujours malicieuse, qui vendait des gaufres le dimanche et, la semaine, des allumettes de contrebande.

— Bah! répondait-elle aux avances du galant, il ne faut plus marier ensemble Meurt-de-Faim et Sans-le-Sou. Quand ce malheur arriva,—autrefois—ils eurent un fils qu'on appela Pécaire! (Pauvre!)

— J'ai pourtant une belle maison, soupirait Sautoul.

— Avec un joli merle dedans, ajoutait la commère.

Et Sautoul souffrait de tant de moquerie ou d'indifférence. Tous les deux jours il attendait la Crubélette au passage: il avait besoin d'un sou d'allumettes.

— Prends-en six paquets, conseillait la marchande; ainsi tu n'auras pas besoin de te tenir si souvent à l'espère.

— C'est que, répliquait Sautoul, elles sont plus fraîches comme ça, puis

tantôt j'ai des rouges, tantôt des noires...

En réalité les noires étaient les meilleures.

Et Sautoul pensait que la Crubélette ne l'aimerait jamais: il en pâtissait. Le merle n'avait pu le distraire bien longtemps de ce souci.

Un jour, deux promeneurs entendirent siffler l'oiseau.

— Or ça, mon bonhomme, dit l'un, qui portait un beau ventre comme une ronde fortune, ce chanteur-là est-il à vendre?

— Si cela vous oblige, monsieur, fit Sautoul en ôtant sa peau de lapin.

— Votre prix?

— Mon Dieu!... les grives sont rares cette année: un merle de grosseur moyenne se vend dans les quinze sous; je parle, bien entendu, d'un merle pour manger, d'un merle mort. Or, celui-ci est en vie, et ça vaut bien, il me semble, quinze sous de plus. En outre, vous avez pu juger qu'il sait jouer du fifre; j'estime cette habileté au même prix qu'un merle vif. Ne serait-il point raisonnable de vous demander trois francs du tout?

— Vous êtes un malin, vous, déclara le gros monsieur avec un rire en cascade.

Puis il tira du gousset un écu de cinq francs.

— C'est que, bredouilla l'autre qui avait vu luire le geste, je n'ai pas de monnaie.

— Tant pis! Vous me donnerez cette vieille cage.

Ainsi Sautoul vendit son merle.

Le dimanche, comme la Crubélette descendait au bourg avec la corbeille de gaufres, Sautoul lui fit signe:

— Je prends deux douzaines de gâteaux, dit-il; paye-toi.

Un écu? La Crubélette loucha. Pour mieux voir, elle se pencha un peu, et le reflet de l'argent illumina son visage.

Elle ne peut rendre que quarante-cinq sous.

— Nous nous reverrons bien, dit Sautoul avec détachement.

Et la Crubélette s'en alla, pensive. Le soir, sous le ciel net comme une vitre, elle revint.

— Je te rapportais la monnaie en passant.

— Peuh ! fit l'autre, il ne fallait pas te déranger. Salut, Crubélette !

Et pendant qu'elle comptait et recomptait les sous comme on repasse des soucis dans sa mémoire, il ajouta :

— Puisque te voilà, ne veux-tu pas faire une "toste" avant de remonter à Cournou ? Il me reste une vieille bouquette et de tes gaufres.

Elle ne refusa point. La journée avait été bonne, la Crubélette rentrait contente. Le dimanche, d'ordinaire, ça marchait bien : après la messe première, les galants payaient des friandises à leur mie. Seulement les gendarmes la guettaient dans la semaine, à cause des allumettes ; elle craignait qu'on ne l'eût dénoncée. Des jaloux.

— Tes gâteaux sont fameux, déclara Sautoul en trempant dans le vin de pourpre fanée qui sentait la violette et la pierre mouillée la pâtisserie craquante et couleur de feu.

— Ne sais-tu pas que j'y mets de l'eau de fleur d'oranger et un bon verre d'eau-de-vie ?

— Tu ne me surprends pas.

A la lumière du "calel," la Crubélette semblait jolie. Ses yeux, roux comme les prunes d'or, gardaient de la douceur malgré leur gueuserie. Elle fixait le feu où des sarments tordaient leurs braises vives et, le cotillon vert un peu relevé, balançait le pied sur son talon. Sautoul s'imaginait qu'elle était enfin devenue sa femme, et il écoutait, engourdi d'aise, de vin, de tiédeur et de rêve, l'aigre bise siffler dans la serrure ou jeter des appels de hibou sur le faitage. C'était, pour ce pauvre, la musique du bonheur.

Soudain, la Crubélette ramassa la corbeille et se leva. Sautoul fit la grimace, car il sentait au cœur un petit déchirement ; mais il sut donner à sa peine un air de philosophie.

— Il te faut bien rentrer, dit-il, car la nuit vient ; mais prends garde : la lune, dans les bois, est de mauvais conseil.

Cefut le seul badinage qu'il se permit. Déjà il scrutait le ciel que le croissant délié rayait d'un coup d'ongle.

Alors elle le complimenta avec une nuance de dépit d'être devenu si raisonnable, et, tout à coup, la main au loquet, pour s'attarder un peu, s'enquit du merle.

— Tiens ! fit Sautoul, il n'est pas rentré.

Mais il alla s'asseoir triste sur le coffre à sel en songeant à la femme qui partait dans les traverses—et à l'oiseau qu'il n'avait plus. Il faudrait attendre les nichées, maintenant, pour avoir des merles qu'on pût apprivoiser et initier aux chansons. Et le bel écu était écorné.

En allant voir si les fagots de la Caylude valaient la peine qu'on en prit une charge, Sautoul remarqua que le château de la Barthe était habité. On l'aura loué, pensa-t-il. Il aperçut toute une compagnie sur la terrasse de l'étang. Une dame fumait, et Sautoul, qui était un preneur de pétun, s'en étonna. Mais il passa soucieux et irrité, car il était pauvre et seul. Pourtant, le souvenir de son merle lui vint à la pensée. "Qui sait, songea-t-il, où ce diable d'homme me l'a emporté?..."

Sautoul cheminait en sifflotant. Et voilà qu'il entendit du bruit dans les branchages. Levant le nez, il reconnut son merle qui tendait le bec et tournait un peu la tête—signe de surprise et de délibération. *J'ai du bon tabac...* siffla Sautoul (et c'était vrai). Puis il tenta vers l'oiseau un geste d'invitation. L'oiseau vola sur son épaule et sauta sur son doigt. Par fortune, le chemin faisait un coude. Sautoul, un rire silencieux sur la face et le merle sous la blouse, coupa par les prés et rentra chez lui. Là, il s'en donna à cœur-joie, d'autant mieux que l'oiseau, content de retrouver un logis sans enfants, voletait à l'aise et jouait du fifre devant le miroir.

Deux jours après, passant devant la maisonnette au toit pointu, le gros monsieur aperçut le merle au soleil sur la pierre du seuil.

— Eh ! l'homme ! cria-t-il, n'est-ce point mon merle ?

— Eh ! répliqua Sautoul, vous ne vous trompez point de beaucoup : c'est

son frère. Seulement, il ne siffle pas encore aussi bien que le vôtre.

— Le mien... le mien a disparu, sacre-bleu ! et celui-là...

— Ah ! ah ! interrompit Sautoul en riant, les merles c'est comme les nègres, ils se ressemblent tous.

— Oui, dit bonnement le gros monsieur ; puis il y a l'air de famille, n'est-ce pas ? Soit. Voulez-vous me céder celui-ci ? C'est à cause des gosses...

— Je regrette, s'excusa Sautoul, mais il faut que j'en garde un.

— Pourquoi faire ? Je vous le paierai comme l'autre... trois francs, sans la cage.

— Inutile, monsieur ; voyez-vous, il n'est pas encore assez bien dressé ; il ne connaît que la moitié de sa chanson. Ça m'ennuierait de le lâcher comme ça ; je suis consciencieux à ma manière.

— Allons ! allons ! rusé compère ! Vous désirez cinq francs ?... Les voici. Et attrapez-moi ce merle.

Ainsi fut fait. Mais trois jours après l'oiseau revenait chez Sautoul. Faut-il ajouter que notre homme était allé à sa rencontre ? Le gros monsieur, d'ailleurs, rentrait à Paris, chassé par l'hiver.

Sautoul lui devait une industrie—une fortune.

Le fin paysan, désormais, suivit les foires, son merle sur l'épaule.

— C'est fidèle comme un chien, expliquait-il, propre comme un chat et gai comme un pinson ;—mais surtout pas de cage : ça l'empêche de siffler. Tel que je vous le dis !

Maint badaud se faisait prendre, payait comptant et se pavanait, l'oiseau sur l'épaule, à l'exemple de Sautoul. Mais celui-ci, agile et petit, se faufilait parmi les blouses et, à la faveur d'un remous causé par le pas-

sage des bœufs ou des voitures, rappelait habilement l'oiseau, qu'il allait vendre plus loin. Sautoul avait un grand sens des physionomies. Néanmoins, après deux ou trois marchés de ce genre, il se hâtait de prendre traverses et "raccourcis."

A ce commerce, notre homme gagnait force pièces ; il les montrait ; sa parole en avait plus de son et d'éclat. La Crubélette, à présent, ne passait plus devant la petite maison coiffée en éteignoir sans soulever le loquet. Elle n'était guère en peine de prétextes : les allumettes semblaient meilleures aujourd'hui, les gaufres plus dorées. Elle rappelait souvent à Sautoul, cette soirée passée ensemble devant le feu, cette soirée de songerie et d'accord. D'autres fois, barrant d'un coup de doigt la poussière du dressoir, elle soupirait, l'air contrarié :

— Ah ! il faudrait une femme d'ordre, ici.

Un dimanche, elle laissa simplement une douzaine de gaufres sur la table.

— Tu les mangeras en pensant à moi.

Alors Sautoul eut pitié d'elle... On les maria sans cérémonie, par un fort vilain temps, oh ! tout à fait sans cérémonie : le merle seul était en noir.

Puis, une nuit, un chat surprit l'oiseau et le croqua.

— Ma foi, dit la femme, ce n'est pas grand'perte : quand il restait à la maison, il trouait les gaufres et faisait partout.

Cette parole affligea Sautoul, car lui seul savait tout ce qu'il devait à son merle.

Il en dressa d'autres : ils sifflaient comme le premier : *J'ai du bon tabac...* ; quelques-uns apprirent même *Viens Poupoule...* Sautoul les vendait—mais ils ne revenaient pas.



RETIRED EARLY

MR. BOREBEIGH—Were you up late last night?

SHE—No ; I was rather expecting you this evening.

THE ANKOU

By Katharine Metcalf Roof

THE sea, intensely blue under a cloudless sky, was dotted with fishing smacks toward the horizon. Against the stone wall at the top of the high bluff a man in faded blue jeans knelt, staring seaward, his head upon his folded arms, so motionless that the old sailor coming up to rouse him thought he was asleep until he saw that his eyes were open.

"How then, Yvon, you are not out with the fleet?"

Yvon raised his head and stared at his friend dully. "Of what use? The sardines have gone. They will not come back."

The old Breton looked out over the sea. His eyes grew remote, wistful. "Not today, perhaps, but tomorrow or the day after. Some day they will return. One never knows when that day may come."

"Meantime we starve," muttered Yvon. His eyes had the uncomprehending hurt look that comes into the eyes of a dog unjustly punished; unconsciously they wandered back to the blue water into which quivering green streaks ran swiftly as if blown by the wind. He was a powerfully built young man, burned almost copper-color by exposure to the sun and sea wind, made for vigorous life and use of his strong muscles, yet he relapsed again into his listless lounging position, his whole attitude one of tragic hopelessness. "You are not out with the boats yourself, Marec."

"My woman is sick," Marec replied. "There was no one to make the soup. But you, Yvon, have no wife nor child to keep you at home." He knocked his pipe against the stone wall to shake

out the ashes, then looked up at the young man, a smile deepening the wrinkles about his keen old eyes. "Let us see now. Is it not almost time for us to hear the *binious* play your wedding dance? It is over a year you have waited, and we sailors do not like to wait."

Yvon knit his brows. "Marry Mònik that she may come and starve with me! Is that a good thing for a man to do?"

Marec began refilling his pipe with a little brass implement ornamented with beads which hung from his belt. "Our girls are usually ready to take their chance. Mònik's father did not wait until Soëzic had a *dot*."

"Neither do I wait for Mònik's *dot*," replied Yvon coldly, "but since neither of us has a *sou* we must wait."

Marec tried a change of subject. "Have you seen the fine new regiment quartered in the town?"

Yvon's face clouded. "And how could I help it when the streets are thick with them!"

"Some of the girls have found fine beaux," the old man chuckled.

"All the worse for them," returned Yvon shortly, "for they mean no good to a poor sardine girl."

The old man glanced at the young one with a humorous shake of the head. "I fear your Mònik has been treating you ill," he remarked. "Certainly you are dismal company." Then, his pipe relighted, he bade Yvon farewell, and walking a few steps down the street turned in at a door over which a half-withered green branch was suspended.

Yvon's eyes returned to the sea. Born of generations who had loved,

son frère. Seulement, il ne siffle pas encore aussi bien que le vôtre.

— Le mien... le mien a disparu, sacre-bleu! et celui-là...

— Ah! ah! interrompit Sautoul en riant, les merles c'est comme les nègres, ils se ressemblent tous.

— Oui, dit bonnement le gros monsieur; puis il y a l'air de famille, n'est-ce pas? Soit. Voulez-vous me céder celui-ci? C'est à cause des gosses...

— Je regrette, s'excusa Sautoul, mais il faut que j'en garde un.

— Pourquoi faire? Je vous le paierai comme l'autre... trois francs, sans la cage.

— Inutile, monsieur; voyez-vous, il n'est pas encore assez bien dressé; il ne connaît que la moitié de sa chanson. Ça m'ennuierait de le lâcher comme ça; je suis consciencieux à ma manière.

— Allons! allons! rusé compère! Vous désirez cinq francs?... Les voici. Et attrapez-moi ce merle.

Ainsi fut fait. Mais trois jours après l'oiseau revenait chez Sautoul. Faut-il ajouter que notre homme était allé à sa rencontre? Le gros monsieur, d'ailleurs, rentrait à Paris, chassé par l'hiver.

Sautoul lui devait une industrie—une fortune.

Le fin paysan, désormais, suivit les foires, son merle sur l'épaule.

— C'est fidèle comme un chien, expliquait-il, propre comme un chat et gai comme un pinson;—mais surtout pas de cage: ça l'empêche de siffler. Tel que je vous le dis!

Maint badaud se faisait prendre, payait comptant et se pavanait, l'oiseau sur l'épaule, à l'exemple de Sautoul. Mais celui-ci, agile et petit, se faufilait parmi les blouses et, à la faveur d'un remous causé par le pas-

sage des bœufs ou des voitures, rappelait habilement l'oiseau, qu'il allait vendre plus loin. Sautoul avait un grand sens des physionomies. Néanmoins, après deux ou trois marchés de ce genre, il se hâta de prendre traverses et "raccourcis."

A ce commerce, notre homme gagnait force pièces; il les montrait; sa parole en avait plus de son et d'éclat. La Crubélette, à présent, ne passait plus devant la petite maison coiffée en éteignoir sans soulever le loquet. Elle n'était guère en peine de prétextes: les allumettes semblaient meilleures aujourd'hui, les gaufres plus dorées. Elle rappelait souvent à Sautoul, cette soirée passée ensemble devant le feu, cette soirée de songerie et d'accord. D'autres fois, barrant d'un coup de doigt la poussière du dressoir, elle soupirait, l'air contrarié:

— Ah! il faudrait une femme d'ordre, ici.

Un dimanche, elle laissa simplement une douzaine de gaufres sur la table.

— Tu les mangeras en pensant à moi.

Alors Sautoul eut pitié d'elle... On les maria sans cérémonie, par un fort vilain temps, oh! tout à fait sans cérémonie: le merle seul était en noir.

Puis, une nuit, un chat surprit l'oiseau et le croqua.

— Ma foi, dit la femme, ce n'est pas grand'perte: quand il restait à la maison, il trouait les gaufres et faisait partout.

Cette parole affligea Sautoul, car lui seul savait tout ce qu'il devait à son merle.

Il en dressa d'autres: ils sifflaient comme le premier: *J'ai du bon tabac...*; quelques-uns apprennent même *Viens Poupoule...* Sautoul les vendait—mais ils ne revenaient pas.



RETIRED EARLY

MR. BOREBEIGH—Were you up late last night?

SHE—No; I was rather expecting you this evening.

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Yvon's eyes returned to the sea. Born of generations who had loved,

feared and served it, he did not know where else to look for help. Each year it had provided him and his neighbors with their bread and each year it had taken its quota of lives as tribute, but now it had turned with a new treachery upon them, starving them by inches. So the hate that is part of every fisherman's love for the sea was uppermost in Yvon's eyes as he questioned the eternal riddle of its waters.

A girl's mocking voice again interrupted his formless reverie. "So you expect to catch the sardines on dry land, Yvon?"

Yvon wheeled about sharply. "You too, Mònik! You taunt me also!"

The girl's eyes fell, but she gave a little shrug. "Is it then a fisherman's business to stand on the shore and stare at the sea while the others are out with the fleet?"

Yvon's face hardened. "Of what use to go out in a boat when one catches no fish? The sardines are gone, I tell you. They will not come back. I go no more upon the sea."

"Then you will starve," replied Mònik calmly. "You know no other way to earn your bread."

Their eyes met, the man's stormy, the girl's indifferent. Although her features were not regular Mònik's face had in it something more than ordinary peasant beauty—more vividness in that she was thinner than nature had intended with the long, slow poverty that has come to the Breton fisher people since the sardines have left their coast. She was superficially of a common Breton type—the cheek-bones wide, the line of the chin deflecting slightly; but her mouth had a greater mobility, a subtler accent of expression than is usual with the girls of her class, and her gray eyes, contrasting sharply with her brown face, were intensely alive. Yvon's jaw tightened as he looked at her. Suddenly he seized her arm roughly.

"I know what you are about. Don't imagine that I do not understand. Old Annelek, who sees better with her dim eyes than some may think, has told me."

Mònik shook off his hand. "What do you mean? Old Annelek drinks too much cider. She has been telling you lies."

"You know very well it was no lie. You were with the young officer last night. You walked with him over the bridge and up the road to Ploaré and thought I would not find out."

Mònik met his eyes coolly. "It is true, if that is all she told you. Why should I care that you know?"

The young fisherman stared at her, speechless with the dumbness of the primitive nature under the influence of strong emotion. "Your promise," he stammered at last. "Are you not mine?"

Mònik shrugged again. "My promise—yes, well—there does not seem to be any money for weddings these days. Meantime I enjoy myself."

Yvon's chest rose and fell tumultuously. "Take care, Mònik," he cried. "No good will come of this. I have seen ill signs. Last night the candle would not light, and the night before a sea-gull tapped with its beak on my window-pane. Next one of us will meet the Ankou."

The girl laughed shortly, her eyes bright and angry. "Only old men and old women believe those tales. You and I do not believe them. It is no use trying to frighten me."

Again he caught her arm with the instinctive impulse of the inarticulate to physical expression. "That is not true. You know very well—when one hears and sees such things one is likely to meet the Ankou, and who sees the Ankou must die."

The girl's eyes glanced aside, but she replied calmly, "And what has all this to do with me?"

Yvon gnawed his lip, struggling with his repressed passion. "If I am to die would you break faith with me first? If you are to die would you go like that—with a broken vow upon your soul?"

"Nonsense!" Mònik knit her low brows. "You talk folly. None of these things frighten me. I shall go my way. Let go of my arm."

Yvon released her arm and leaned back against the wall, struggling for self-control, but the muscles of his face were drawn and his hands twitched.

"What do you mean by that? What is it that you are going to do?"

Mônik did not reply at once. Then suddenly she broke out fiercely: "I mean that I am tired of being hungry every day—all the days. For two years now I have not had enough to eat—never enough. In the Winter I am cold. My clothes fall to pieces. I have only my fête-day dress whole upon me. If a man gives me food to eat, cider to drink and gives me a new shawl what harm is it? Whether it is harm or not I shall take it."

Yvon stared at the girl whose face, no longer nonchalant, had suddenly taken on an expression of tragic intensity. For a moment he was unable to speak.

"Thou, thou," he stammered at last, "thou hast taken the man's gifts, eaten his bread—"

Mônik nodded, looking straight in his eyes, her head a little thrown back.

"Then indeed it is all over. I will forget the day we twined little fingers and walked together beside the sea at the pardon of Sainte Anne. All is over."

"As you wish," replied Mônik indifferently. All traces of her outburst had vanished. She readjusted her faded blue shawl, then turned and walked away. Yvon stood for a moment without moving, then ran after her.

"Mônik—wait—come back. If you will promise never to speak to the soldier again it shall be as it was before. I will take you back."

"I do not want you to take me back," Mônik replied evenly. "You go your way and I shall go mine. Do not follow me and call out to me on the street."

Yvon remained where she left him, watching her until her white coif had disappeared from his sight around the corner, then he plunged down the street and into the same door through which a few moments before old

Marec had passed. The little buvet, dark and ill-smelling, was more than half-full. He was greeted with vague hilarity by several fishermen already well under the influence of the Breton national drink, not so much from intemperate indulgence as from the pitiful lack of other food. But Yvon answered their sallies roughly, choosing a single seat in a corner, so they soon left him to himself. After a time he arose, flung his sou down upon the little counter, and without speaking to anyone, went out the door and turned in the direction of a path that skirted the edge of the bluff. He passed groups of men and women mending their blue and brown nets without recognizing them. Some of the women paused in their work a moment to look after him.

"Yvon is in a black mood today," remarked one.

"And small wonder when his heart is tied to Mônik, for she has no heart," replied a young girl who was making lace.

"I do not believe Mônik to be heartless," replied an older woman whose skin was like a russet apple. "It is not possible just now for them to marry. Mônik is young and at a pardon the men always turn to look at her."

The young girl dropped a stitch. "I do not know for what reason," she muttered.

The old woman smiled and shook her head. "We women never do—and neither do the men, for that matter. Yet there will be one girl whom they will look at and follow. It is her good luck."

"Aye, and ill luck sometimes," muttered another woman.

Yvon strode rapidly along the little path until his figure disappeared from their sight. He did not stop until he reached a point which was entirely deserted. Then he threw himself face downward upon the short grass and lay there motionless. Far below he heard the waves licking the rocks. His eyes, wandering heavily over the sea, rested upon a white point jutting

out from the cliffs below the sea-line. It was the shrine of Sainte Anne of the Rocks. Tonight at high tide it would be covered. As Yvon lay there, black thoughts crowding thickly through his brain, a fisherman whose jean blouse was the same color as the golden-brown sea-weed strewn the beach, stopped and knelt bare-headed before the shrine.

Yvon knew the prayer that the other fisherman was praying. How many times in the last two years had he knelt there himself to repeat that same prayer! Yes, and made the long climb over the hills to Plonevez-Porzay to the wonderful image of Sainte Anne de la Palude in its ancient chapel. Yet this prayer—the prayer of all the anxious hearts that had sought comfort there—had not been answered. Lately he had made another prayer and that also had not been answered. Could it be that Sainte Anne, the patron saint of their coast, had forgotten them? Well—he would pray it once again, that last prayer. But instead of rising and taking the steep path down the cliff to the shrine he continued to lie there heavily. The sound of voices breaking through the soft continuous rustle of the water roused him. Then suddenly his muscles grew tense. The woman's voice was Mònik's. The couple drew nearer and passed a few feet away from him. He did not raise his head.

"Another drunken sailor," he heard the man say. He did not catch Mònik's reply, but he heard the soldier laugh. When their voices had died away again he sat up with a terrible look upon his face. After a moment's thought—for Yvon did not think quickly—he rose and turning down a lightly-trodden path, ran along it until he came to a place where it crossed the main path; then he waited.

Presently he caught sight of Mònik's white coif and the soldier's square-cropped head side by side. The Frenchman was only slightly taller than Mònik, and fully two heads shorter than the Breton. Yvon with folded arms waited for them to come up. They were within a few feet of him

before Mònik discovered him. She started a little and changed color, but her eyes did not falter.

"I wish to speak to you for the last time," Yvon said to her in Breton.

"Have we not had one last time already today?" she replied, with a little affectation of ennui. Yet she answered also in Breton.

"It is this—" Yvon stood squarely in the path with his eyes fastened upon her—and the little French soldier, twirling his mustache with an elaborate intention of superiority, somehow felt it wiser not to interfere.

"I love you, so I give you one more chance. If you will come back with me now, tomorrow the drums shall call our marriage in the street. I will work in the fields or in the hotel across the bay. Somehow I will earn our bread. If you refuse—"

"You will never speak to me again," the girl mocked, but her gray eyes were angry under their slightly oblique lids.

A somberness like that of the sea before a storm filled the fisherman's eyes at her taunt. "No, I shall never speak to you or anyone again. And you—"

"You talk nonsense," retorted Mònik sharply. "Men do not kill themselves unless they are drunk. It is just a threat to frighten women."

Yvon shook his head. "I shall neither kill myself nor you, Mònik. I shall pray once more to Sainte Anne of the Rocks that you will come back to me. And if my prayer is not answered, if you do not come, the sea shall take me. It would have starved me by inches, but it shall take me alive. And you—I will leave you to that which is worse. You will live to be like old Nonnik who asks alms at the pardons." When he had finished he turned sharply and walked away. And in spite of her bravado the defiant laughter died out of Mònik's face as she stood watching his retreating figure.

The French soldier roused her with a hand upon her arm. "Come, you do not care for that rough fellow. Let us walk on."

But Mònik drew back. "No, I shall not go any farther. I am going home."

"Nonsense! You do not fear him and his jealous rage. I will not let him hurt you."

But to his surprise and chagrin Mònik turned without a word and ran suddenly away from him, yet not in the direction Yvon had taken.

The tide was coming in in great, threatening waves, for the sea had grown suddenly rougher. The sky which had been so blue at noonday had become overcast, so that now at late afternoon it was like twilight. For an hour Yvon had knelt at the shrine in the rocks praying. It was so placed that the force of the incoming waves breaking out on the farther rocks, slipped in in an eddying circle. As yet the water had not reached him where he knelt.

He knew that it was the final hour. Mònik knew where to find him and Sainte Anne knew her heart. If she came before the tide covered the shrine, she still loved him. If she did not come—the salt water which covered the image should cover him also. The sea which had denied him the means of life should take him alive.

The waves were running in more and more swiftly. The circling eddy, stealthily crawling toward the kneeling figure, elongated to a long finger that reached out, almost touching him, and still he prayed with his eyes upon the image. But the next moment in the midst of his prayer he half started up. The sea had washed in over the edge of his sabots. He finished his prayer a little confusedly, then rose and scanned the edge of the cliff and the little path that led down to the shrine. It might be that an angle of the rocks was temporarily hiding her from sight. . . But no, there was no one there.

"If she comes she still loves me, she is saved," he muttered. Then he knelt again and prayed with his eyes

upon the primitive semi-grotesque face of the image. He had not once turned to look at the sea. It was up to his knees now; the next wave reached to his waist. Still she had not come. Up higher, higher. . . . His prayer broke off abruptly: the creeping icy finger had reached his heart. He tried to take up the thread of his prayer, but other words rose to his lips: "Mònik, Mònik, come to me, come back—"

The water rose higher and the sky grew blacker, but over the land there was still a sullen band of gray light. Upon the head of the cliff a woman's form appeared, her shawl blown out in the fierce wind, and a woman's voice called, "Yvon, Yvon, are you there?" But the voice did not carry down into the dark seething waters, and among them Yvon's head and shoulders were not distinguishable.

The sea had risen to his throat. Instinctively he rose, the whirlpool of water boiling about him, buffeting him. A great wave broke over him, blinding him so that he could no longer see the half-submerged shrine. He staggered and drove the palms of his hands into his eyes to clear his sight, then with a last appeal looked upward. On the very edge of the cliff he saw a dark form looming large against the sky. With a wild cry, "*An Ankou*—" he flung himself against the dripping image, the desperate, ineradicable instinct of prayer, trained in Christianity, struggling with the pagan that is in every Breton. He had seen the Ankou. His last hour had struck. It was death, not love, that had come to him.

Then his love rose into faith stronger than fear. It was as if he flung his very soul before the altar of the saint.

"Save her," he prayed, "Sainte Anne, Mother of Mary—save Mònik."

Then the sea gathered itself up and choked the words in his mouth.



MRS. A. (aged twenty-three)—How old ought a woman to be to give up calling her mother "mama"?

MRS. B. (aged sixty)—I don't know. I'll ask mama.

A WOMAN ON A BALCONY

By Kate Masterson

ON an old balcony over looking the Grand Canal a woman sat, a lace shawl half-covering her hair, streaked with gray over the temples, rather rough in texture and caught back from her face in a manner that makes for character rather than coiffure. Her features were those of a thin, alert middle age, lacking in the softness of the matron's or the delicate curves of youth, but glowing with an almost exultant intelligence, suggesting strangely slumbering fires or music heard from behind closed doors making the hearer glad that something muffles the shrill blare.

Her mouth had the drawn look that in a woman's face always suggests suffering, while it gives a man's the stern quality that will pass for strength with most persons, although it is but experience. Her hands, locked rather tensely in her lap, were yellowish white, delicately worn, with little flesh upon them. The friendly Italian dusk that surrounded her was kind as the mists in which some artists shroud their paintings, giving them meaning, symbolic and wonderful.

She leaned forward over the railing, almost smiling as she heard from below laughter, English voices and a fading drift of Italian song as the boatman pushed off into the distance. But it was not the one for whom she waited. She was amused at this inevitable bit of local color—this cherished dream of Venice—to the ear that has ever heard this upcoming of sound from its waters—this echo of voices, the plash of oars and the song of the gondolier.

One might travel the world over without ever getting the same effect in the way of cities. It was an undertone, yet distinct in itself as the roar of New York's traffic; the sounds of a moist London May; the hoarse warning

call of the Paris *cocher* and the crack of his whip as he drove through the freshly watered tar odors of the night.

Doubtless these newer cities whispered too, but in different voices, not always understood, just as lives faintly sound their individual note sometimes above the jangle of talk, the footfall of friends, the clink of tea-cups, the odd blendings of sound that get to mean life to us and that make us glad it is so loud there is no fear that our own small cry may sound any distincter in the din than dead leaves falling in a forest storm.

The woman on the balcony began to think that if the world only heard the undertones instead of the echoes, life would cease to be superficial—it would become a tragedy—not half so desirable as the patter of drawing-rooms. Masks would fall and faces would show like painted dancers in the sunlight. The underlying lesson of life was, after all, to beat down the undertones with the cymbals of pleasure and the trumpets of rejoicing.

This realization had never come to this woman on the balcony until, the preceding evening, a man had asked her to marry him, a man whom she never before had met, although she had heard of him the world over. Ordinary persons described him as a devil. The voice of his life had shouted his deeds over the mountain-tops, and in several tongues this was his sobriquet.

As she had spoken to him with a sudden wonder in the fact that he was fifty if a day, gray and with worn, deep eyes, although still straight and slim as a West Pointer, she had realized that his voice, speaking in faultless French, in English and in Italian to others about the dinner-table, was but the shadow of the man—and strangely enough, the individual—the Man him-

self, spoke to her as she listened, and told her that his reputation belied him. He merely had not led his sins through curtained doorways, buried them in politics or entangled them in legalities.

His disguise—his mask of the devil rather pleased him. He gloried in it as some men do in a reputation for philanthropy or great courage or a desire to reform the world. Such shadows are always suspected of their unreality—the disguise of the devil was more subtle—no one would think of accusing him of a virtue.

As she spoke with him the woman had begun to understand, as though he told her, that the devil is the only character that through ages of change has continued to be true. These were the undertones in which he spoke to her in a new language and it was exactly as though she had been traveling all her life to him to listen to this voice. She had determined to ask him tonight why he had asked her to marry him, for while she was famous she was neither young nor beautiful—nor even in good health.

She feared what she herself had spoken without intending to. She felt that he had read her—all those pages that she never showed her audiences on stages or off them. She still trembled with the thought that this strange man had at once known her—not as she seemed even to herself, but as she was. She recalled the men she had met in many cities; men good and great and renowned—statesmen who had worn the livery of life and kept its rules and tripped the figure of its dances. And they had not interested her except as types.

Suddenly had come this man, grown to an age of after-dinner napping, yet frisking wearily in life's pleasure places. He had long ago forsaken its vices. He was irreverent and never visited cathedrals except to criticize old masters and jeer at placid purple saints in their stained-glass aureoles.

She feared that in some way her inner voice—the voice of the woman so long silenced—had called out to him like a lost dog in a storm. Never until

he took her hand in his had she realized that her own life was only a hideous mumming mask of emotions, tears, passions portrayed on a stage for gaping crowds to see.

And this was what she had gloried in—the strifes, the rewards, losing sight of all real things, thinking that this only was real. Even when she looked in her mirror—she had not seen the woman there, nearly old, gray and ill, but the artist fed with flattery, praise and plaudits; yes—she had even seen the faces of great heroines reflected there instead of her own, scarred with paints and pencilings.

This man whom they called the devil had not spoken of this life to her, had not even praised her or hinted at his own iniquities, apologetically as a commonplace devil might have done. He had only looked at her pityingly and kindly and taken her hand tenderly as he might a child's. And at once a wave of helplessness had overswept her soul and this voice within had called to him—over the music of the dinner-players and the chatter and the clink of glasses and silver.

She felt with a tingling shame that he saw the untouched gray of her hair, the lips drawn with fine phrases, the hands worn with much gesturing. And he pitied her! She almost laughed aloud. He had heard the undertone of her life that had been stilled even to her own ears until tonight. And now she heard nothing else but this beating, clamoring at her heart like a caged bird.

She raised her hand to the lace that covered her hair and drew it more closely to shade her face, for she knew that the fascination, the charm of coquetry, that grow about other women as the foliage does about a flower, had all absorbed themselves in this hungry stage life and that now, the fever of attainment done, nothing remained but the husk, which must forever be painted and decked up in stage clothes, under dead wigs and gilt coronets to appear attractive.

Leaning her cheek against the stone pillar beside her, she listened to the

whisperings of the years, filled once with the unterrified fires of youth and romance seeking expression in her untrained enthusiasm that had then seemed so glorious, so high above the earth and everything commonplace. That was the prelude, the song of life—fancy, hope, aspiration, effort, all making a music that sounded above sordid surroundings and the hardships of the stage.

Then the measure changed and became slower and less exuberant, but still it kept alive even when the realities of life and its necessities had stalked cruelly before her and mocked her prayers. Then came another movement, small triumphs and defeats, chaotic conditions, a growing scorn of everything but this one thing called Art, this tormenting delight of creating and interpreting; this mouthing of great lines written by poets living and dead until she had almost thought the expressions those of her own soul.

She began to search through those years for the memory of one real thing, in vain. Perhaps it was the time when she was forced to visit the great dressmakers and order clothes that she did not understand, longing all the while to go about in a hood and a cloak.

Even her dreams had been haunted by this fever—this other life as Tosca or the wife of Claude or the pale woman of the camellias. Her days had been blurred series of events, the studying of parts, the reading of plays, the searching like a vampire in the souls of other shadows like herself in the hope of hearing the quiet voice that might bid her rest and be herself—just a woman for a while.

And this had been the goal of all the music, dancing, marching, plodding to this dull, middle age, ungraceful gray? An actor to be hung in the trappings of stage queens, to smile and sigh and answer to cues in all languages, old meanings to new tunes! And that is all the cheers meant after her carriage wheels—the recognition of a clever mummer trailing in the robes of women who had been real—even the

worst of them. She had wept their tears and others sweeter; those of Marguerite and Joan and Juliet—playing all the time with emotions of which she had only an intellectual comprehension, while the bare-shouldered women who watched her from the boxes applauded because they really knew love, hate, joy and pain.

She wished she had never lived until this night of awakening to realization of things as they were.

And why had this man who did not even pretend to be other than a devil have the power to make her hear these crucifying voices? She was suffering now—not acting. She was living her own life for this moment just as other women did. And in a moment he would be here, and she knew that she longed to see him again, even in this mood.

She knew that he would not expect from her any small coqueties. But why, then, had he come to her, stern-eyed and sad, with gray in her hair and in her soul? Was it that he too had listened for the undertone of life in vain, wandering in gardens and over graves, in gay cities where life danced and sailing over oceans where the tempests call sometimes and then grow still?

There came to her again the sound of the oars beneath the balcony, a soft Italian voice of thanks, then his, very gentle for a devil's, telling the boatman when to return. She trembled and hurriedly ran to a mirror, smoothing her hair and pinning it with a comb of white coral. And when the servant announced him she could not reply for a moment in the fear that her soul might tell him secrets again in spite of her will.

But a strange great joy came to her heart when she heard his voice, and it sent the blood rushing to her cheeks when she saw him take from the folded gloves he carried, a rose, white, crushed and warm, somewhat as it might be from the clasp of a devil, and as he placed it in her hands, clasped, trembling, he raised it to his lips and she looked through strange new tears into his tired eyes.

HIS EXCELLENCY'S OX

By Hiram Tong

HIS excellency the governor fled to the inner room of his official suite when life pressed too closely. Not that he abused its inner comforts by too constant use; his self-denial in this respect was cunning, the self-denial of a gourmand who fasts one meal in order to gorge the next. He took refuge there only in dire straits, either to shut out the reverberating noises of the Capitol, or to escape the nagging of his immaculate private secretary, or to get rid of his friends and the promises he had erstwhile made.

It was a pleasant room, this inner room of his excellency's suite, with its writing-table of mahogany, strewn with papers and letters and expensive writing apparatus, with its revolving book-case sturdily supporting a score of ponderous (and unused) law digests, its corner bookshelves reaching up to the ceiling. There was even a stout, important-looking library-ladder leaning against the shelves, and soft-toned rugs on the floor, and—a final proof that his excellency loved the beautiful—a ro-tund and bedragoned jardinière holding a Boston fern. There was also a bust of Voltaire, done in bronze, jeering down from the security of a corner shelf. The few engravings on the dark green walls vouched for his excellency's strictly orthodox taste in art, and one picture, a water-color dashed with yellow daffodils swaying under a flood of yellow sunshine, was held dear for sentimental reasons.

Late in the afternoon of the day in which his excellency the governor tasted the bitterness of things, he sat in the inner room, looking at the blur of yellow daffodils a long while, rather absently;

then he turned his head and looked out of the window at his elbow. The lower sash was up, and his eyes rested on the stretch of lawn, very green and elaborately cared for, which rolled down to the asphalt of the street. Between the greensward and the pavement ran a flower-bed, of ribbon width, filled with daffodils which rustled and bent under the freshening west wind. The long rays of the setting sun struck in through the opened window and glanced over the governor, touching up the lines in his face and dazzling his rather dull eyes. He stared out of the window so intently that an interested observer might have imagined he was beating out wonderful policies in the game of his playing, whereas his mind was empty, or filled only with a sense of growing daffodils and the caressing west wind and the softened glow of the sun.

At last he turned away from the opened window. "But this is notwork," he murmured reluctantly. "I've got to finish this business—tonight." His excellency's voice dragged on the last word.

He leaned over the table and looked a moment at a crackling parchment paper, which bore the seal of State and an imposing legend to the effect that it came to his excellency from the Department of Justice.

"It seems that *I* must decide *it*," murmured his excellency, with his odd emphasis.

He picked up the crackling parchment and read it slowly:

... "And whereas it is beyond the function of this Court to restrain the execution of the law properly administered; and whereas it is the opinion of this Court

that the defendant has received just trial and adequate sentence in the lower Courts of the State: therefore we recommend the defendant to the clemency of his excellency the governor of this State, praying him to consider the defendant's youth, the many extenuating circumstances of her act, and the great punishment she has already suffered, and that he pardon her crime, as we believe a just and merciful God has pardoned it.

"Words, words! And so it comes at last to his excellency the governor of this State." He turned away from the paper and looked out into the golden west.

"It is his excellency's opinion that she doesn't deserve a pardon any more than the meanest convict at the coal mines. But—she is the senator's niece . . . *But*—murder is murder, the Supreme Court of this State to the contrary opinion."

Again the governor fell idle and gravely watched the sun sink into a smother of tumbled clouds and the glow flame up beyond the trees that topped the western hills, until it shone through their hazy cloud of bare branches as fires shine through the leafless forest. And as he looked out the breeze freshened across the river and blew against his nostrils the haunting, vague bud and earth smells of Spring that are so intolerably sweet.

The governor sighed lingeringly and pulled down the window, shutting out young Spring, and turned to the paper awaiting him.

"Murder is murder," he went on, finishing his argument. "No—I shall not follow the recommendation of the Supreme Court . . ."

He picked up his pen and drew the paper nearer. "*Not granted*," he wrote. Striking a black dash after the words, he waited a moment, pen uplifted. Should he take the trouble to write down *his* conception of the immutable Law, *his* ideal of the Justice with the blindfold eyes? Who would understand him? Certainly not his party managers, who desired great things of the senator. Certainly not the senator—the least of what he expected was obedience to his wishes, nor the public, whose eyes were blinder than a sculp-

tured justice. Would they understand if he troubled to write it all out?

"There is only one person in this broad State who will understand my action. And she will not"—he smiled wryly—"because she happens to be a friend of 'this defendant.'"

As he mused, mildly pleased that he dared do as he wished, the outer door opened and his secretary entered.

"Governor Straphan," he announced rather breathlessly, "the senator insists on speaking with you. I told him that you were not to be disturbed, that you would not receive anyone just now—"

"But the governor will receive me—" A man pushed the secretary aside, entered and unceremoniously closed the door.

"Now, Straphan," he said coldly, eying the governor across the short width of the room, "they tell me that you have not yet decided on the pardon. . . . I depend on you, Straphan," he ended significantly.

"Then they told you wrong," the governor took up his words. "*I have* decided on the pardon."

He pushed the paper across the table. The senator read it in a glance, his face flushing red as he saw the words, scarcely yet dry, that the governor had written.

"But this is rot," he began impatiently. "I depended on you for this matter, Straphan."

The governor regarded the senator a moment, casually admiring, as he always did, his air of command, the high breeding of his handsome face, all the marks of a trained and highly specialized human animal. And if he saw new lines in the face opposite, he gave no sign of this knowledge.

"Probably you did," he said at last, impersonally. "I'm sorry, senator, but that's all"—he pointed to his written words—"that I seem able to do."

"Really, Straphan—" the senator began; then he caught his words and waited a moment. "There seem to be a good many things that you can do, or rather that you can leave undone. For instance," he went on easily, "you have not signed that decision of yours,

and you have not returned it yet. It may occur to you that you wish to change your first decision—" He stopped and eyed the governor, his face hardening into dogged lines.

"I intend to sign it, as it stands, in about five minutes," remarked the governor tranquilly.

"You forget that she is my niece."

"I have scarcely been allowed to forget *that*," said the governor gently.

"Then—I— Look here, Straphan, the Supreme Court recommends this pardon."

"They also have not forgotten, it seems."

"Sometimes, Straphan, I wonder whether you are a charlatan or merely a fool." The senator tapped the paper restlessly. "I suppose one must convince you that this pardon is just . . ."

The governor nodded. "I am convinced that it is unjust."

"Good God!" The senator rasped forward in his chair. "What kind of man are you? Don't you know that I can break you next year?" He checked his words with effort. "Don't you know that our friends—*your friends*—urge this, and that right and reason and humanity demand that you sign this pardon?"

"Nonsense! Right and reason and humanity have nothing to do with this matter. I know it would be better for me to sign this paper as you wish—because you wish it. If I granted your niece's pardon, senator, it would be because she is your niece and I am afraid of you in the Fall election. But I am more afraid of myself than of you"—the governor smiled whimsically—"so I decline to sign the pardon."

For a moment the two men regarded each other, the governor serene and smiling, the senator nervously tapping the pardon with fingers that trembled.

"I suppose," he said at last, "that it is impossible to convince you that you are wrong, or to make you change your opinion since you believe that you are right?" A sneer had crept into his voice.

"Quite," said his excellency.

"Then listen to me," went on the senator, his voice rising and steeling. "I ask you to grant this pardon out of favor to me. I have not been unfriendly in the past. You will recall many things I have done for you, Straphan, I think, and now I ask you to return them . . ."

"My dear senator," the governor protested, smilingly.

"For the woman, then, Straphan. She has been punished enough as it is. That brute deserved to die a hundred times. I would have killed him myself—if I had known. Surely"—he pointed to the pardon—"surely you also admit extenuating circumstances?"

"Certainly. And the jury estimated the extenuating circumstances, senator. If they had not, do you think that her sentence would have been five years only, and for wilful murder?"

"Murder," interrupted the senator angrily. "It was not murder. . . . She avenged her wrongs."

"The State calls it murder, not I," objected the governor. "I am of the opinion that a woman has the right—or privilege—of punishing her betrayer, and I'm glad society is rid of Laphear."

"Well, then—"

"But the State calls such an act murder. The State has even arranged a nicely graduated series of penalties for such an act, which, by the way, it has made quite possible. The State does it all, and you—you have been making the laws of this State for fifteen years. Don't blame me for this impossible situation—or these impossible laws. I am merely the governor, sworn to execute the law, no matter how silly and unjust. My oath does not allow me even the liberty of discrimination. I cannot sign your niece's pardon, senator, merely because she is a victim of society and the law, for there are some three thousand similar victims in the State at present—"

The senator got to his feet. "This is pretty talk from the chief executive of this State," he said bitterly.

"You remember," Straphan reminded him good-naturedly, "that part of my large majority came from

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The senator got to his feet. "This is pretty talk from the chief executive of this State," he said bitterly.

"You remember," Straphan reminded him good-naturedly, "that part of my large majority came from

the socialists. I am wholly socialist in theory—and practice,” he added, smiling.

For a moment the senator walked up and down the room, the governor wheeled his chair and looked out into the darkening west, and a silence fell on them.

At last the senator checked the restless treadmill of his steps. “I cannot let her go to the Convict Farms, Straphan. It would kill her. You know the horrible conditions there—and the life there—Straphan, it would kill her, I tell you.”

The governor wheeled about suddenly.

“You remember,” he said sharply, “that I’ve been trying for three years to get this State to build decent penitentiaries—at least for the women. I’ve flooded the Assembly with messages on prison reform until the papers make a joke of my prison agitation—demagoguery. And each time I’ve been blocked. Why? My dear senator, nobody knows better than yourself. The first session—do you remember my first message? And last year, and this year, senator, who has killed my recommendations in committee? Who has defeated, the devil knows how—the bills I’ve forced before the Houses? Each time I’m told that our senior senator is opposed to the measure, each time your henchmen vote me down.”

The senator’s large manner of authority came back to him. “Many of your intended reforms, sir, were inexpedient. I did not consider it wise to withdraw from the industries in the State so much convict labor in so short a time.”

“My dear senator, was it not because your companies in the State depend on convict labor?”

“I did not think it expedient, Straphan, I tell you—”

“No, of course not,” said the governor shortly. “I dare say you acted as you thought best—best for the State, best for the convicts, men, women, *and children*, best for your companies. But I tell you, as I’ve told you before,

that the lease system is a damnable shame to the State, and our convict camps and farms are small-sized, concentrated hells. Don’t blame me that there is not one in all the State that’s fit to receive your niece.”

“Straphan”—the senator’s voice choked—“you go too far.”

“I am simply stating the truth,” the governor replied stubbornly. “Of course it’s offensive, but I can’t help that—of course it hurts you. There’s an Eastern parable—I can’t recall it—but the gist of it is that we are horribly upset if it is our ox that is in the ditch; if it’s our neighbor’s, we stand by and are amused. It is quite true. You can’t expect me, as governor of this State, to feel as you do about your niece going to one of these places, any more than you feel for the other people who have been sent there, and are kept there by the laws we make and they break. It’s not my ox that’s in the ditch.”

II

WHEN the senator left him, his excellency thrust out his lip. “And so,” he murmured, “it all depends on whose ox is in the ditch. Now, the senator’s inconsistency—”

The door opened again and the governor, looking over his shoulder, frowned, then suddenly smiled in welcome. A woman stood on the threshold, frankly regarding him.

“May I come in, Hugo?” she asked.

Then, without waiting for his permission and smiling at the perfunctoriness of her question, she entered. The governor sat still and watched her move toward him, an odd look of youth and eagerness on his face.

“My dear,” he spoke impulsively, “you grow more beautiful every day—with the Spring. You are the spirit of Spring.”

She was near enough now to touch his shoulder caressingly, with a fine, gentle movement.

“Hugo,” she said quite simply, “haven’t you punished the senator enough? I met him—out there—”

she nodded to the ante-chamber, "and he is suffering—"

"Oh, the senator," his excellency began drily.

"He loves poor Eva, as we all do," the woman went on, the glow that his welcome had brought to her face paling. "Poor Eva!" she sighed.

His excellency's quick frown came. "I am *not* punishing the—senator. Did he tell you that—that—?"

"Tell me what?" she insisted quickly.

His excellency laughed ruefully. "Why, that I was getting—even—playing Providence and bringing the matter home—"

The woman's gray eyes, looking down in his moody, impatient face, suddenly flashed into laughter.

"What children you two men are! He said many unflattering things in his best oratorical manner. And he called you 'a selfish, egotistical—*poseur*' was his word. There, I have hurt you."

"No, you have not!" he protested quickly. "Go on."

"And that he hoped to God you would be punished some day in a like measure." Her voice sobered. "'In a like measure,' he said."

"Small danger of that," remarked his excellency. "My oxen do not fall into ditches . . ."

The woman looked at him blankly, and he explained. "I entertained the senator with a parable—a parable with a nice moral to it, and he didn't appreciate it—the moral, I mean."

"I know!" Again her eyes laughed. "Oh, Hugo, how could you? The poor senator! He told me what you said, and he called you a senseless, mocking egoist. And I—I agreed with him."

She broke off and sat down in the chair opposite the governor. "Now," she announced, crossing her hands on the table with a charming air of importance, "you can't put me off, and you can't make me angry as you did the senator. What are you going to do, Hugo, about poor Eva?"

"I have refused to grant her the pardon," said the governor, his eyes becoming hard and thoughtful.

"Why?"

"Because she really murdered Laphear—because if she had been a poor creature of the slums she'd have been hanged, or sentenced for life, months ago. My dear, I must be impartial in the execution of even an unjust justice."

They had become very serious.

"Are you sure," she asked gently, "that your old wish to punish the senator for fighting your reforms hasn't something to do with your decision? Are you not forgetting poor Eva?"

"No, no, I assure you. I did not bring in this verdict, you remember. Twelve other men, and a judge, are responsible for it, and I—I am content with their decision."

The woman thought a moment, her delicate brows drawn.

"But you know, Hugo, that Laphear deserved to die—" she broke off uncertainly. "I knew them both, Hugo, and you knew Eva. Surely one owes something to one's friendships, to one's own idea of justice, and you have said that Laphear deserved to die."

"My dear one," said the governor, austerity in his tones, "we won't discuss Laphear. Even his name is indecent."

"But," the woman laughed a little protestingly, "we must discuss the merits of the case, Hugo. I must convince you that Eva should not be punished any further. I saw her yesterday, and such a change!" Her sensitive tones quivered. "Hugo, she is really younger than I, you know, and she looks twenty years older than she is. Her hair is gray. I do not think she fears the punishment of her sentence—for she doesn't even understand about that yet—she doesn't know what that horror means—but the shock of realizing afterward that she had really killed the man she loved—and she did love him—that dreadful trial—the disgrace of it all has completely killed the life in her. If you saw her, Hugo, you would be more merciful. She is pitiable."

"It's a dreadful mess," said his excellency shortly. "A dreadful, disgusting scandal. My dear," he felt his way slowly, "I don't want to wound you, but—don't you think that you shouldn't

see Eva again? Your last visit, yesterday, to the jail was written up at length, sketched with a good deal of local coloring. And the same accounts drew attention to our approaching marriage—it was even commented on as contrasting with your friend's sad situation."

He turned aside impatiently, flinging his leg over the arm of his chair. "I don't wish to seem unsympathetic, but the papers *have* made capital out of our—of *your* friendship for Eva. They have even said"—his voice burst out with subdued vehemence—"that you were a friend of Laphear's. I don't like your name appearing in such a sickening mess."

The woman looked at his austere profile, a subtle amusement lightening her face. "But where are your socialistic theories?" she asked.

"Oh," said his excellency shortly, "that is all right for me. Nevertheless, I don't like your name in such an affair—or you to see such things or to know that they exist."

"Nevertheless, I do know that they exist." She smiled wryly and reflected a moment. "Now I know why the senator called you an egoist."

"If you are going to defend the senator—" he exclaimed in mock dismay.

But the woman was not listening. She had leaned forward, her chin resting in the hollow of her pink palms. Her gray eyes strained past the governor, and her full lips were oddly straightened.

"Laphear deserved to die," she said, with an odd little defiance. "No, Hugol! I must say what I think—because I think it and because in my poor opinion the case rests on Eva's right to defend, or rather avenge, her great wrongs."

The governor made a curt gesture of distaste. "If you like, I'd rather not discuss Laphear. A man whose name is notorious, who made a profession of amorous conquests, who deceived and then boasted of his triumphs—ugh! I hope he's rotting in the deepest inferno. Nevertheless," he finished stern-

ly, "the law protects such men. But let us forget him—his name should not sully your lips."

The woman continued to look at the governor, and as she looked a certain pale resolve settled around her mobile lips.

"But we can't forget him, for Eva's act was caused by his atrocious behavior—and if her act were justified she should not be punished."

"The verdict maintains that her act was not justified, and I am content with that decision."

"She should not be punished. At the most," the woman's words slowed and fell with a terrible distinctness, "Eva did only what some of us were not brave enough to do."

"Some of us?" repeated his excellency.

She nodded, and her eyes met his with a desperate courage.

"What some of us—what I, for instance, should have done, before Eva had cause to—do it—"

"You?"

"Yes, I."

Her eyes darkened and grew more desperately defiant. "Did you not, just then, say that Laphear was notorious for—his amorous conquests? And do you not remember that before we knew each other—he and I—were—friends? Well, I should have done what Eva did later—only—perhaps I lacked the courage—"

"You?"

"I did not tell you, because I knew your liberal ideas—on such matters, and I thought you wouldn't care about it. But—now—I cannot let Eva suffer without telling you that—I might have been in her place—if I had had the courage—"

Her defiant eyes dropped, and the governor, blankly watching her, saw the hot color rise, scorching up to her hair. He began to understand and a hideous doubt clutched at his breast.

"You?"

The terrible energy of his cry shocked the woman. She rose quickly.

"Hugo—" she began impulsively. "Sign Eva's pardon," she finished al-

most fiercely. "Sign it, for she has paid for your clemency—she and I."

Then while the fear—the doubt so fast becoming certainty—clutched at his excellency's throat, the woman turned and fled the room. When she was gone the governor stared after her, and then, when the door had closed, he rose and stumbled to the window and leaned against the pane, and peered out to the dusk with burning eyes.

The smother of tumbled clouds had leveled into long copperish brown banks, between which lay clear pools of shimmering green light. The glory and glow of the sunset had gone, but it was very still and peaceful, and low down in the clear green light a star burned. His excellency looked into the west until the light faded and darkness came, his mind empty, numb with the horror of the thing he had just heard, his pulses throbbing, hammering out the name of the woman.

Once he cried out protestingly, as though the woman were there to deny the monstrous thing, "You—you!" And again, "My God! You!"

And after the dulness had passed, rage came and shook him and left him white and ghastly-eyed. That he had been deceived! That the woman he had loved was unworthy of his love—his great love! That even then men were laughing at him—and at the woman!

But the rage beat itself out and a great calm—it seemed to his excellency the mysterious quiet of the evening—came and left him with an intolerable sense of the futility of things, of the failure of his life. As he stood there he knew that he had not touched Life before, that he had not known reality until the present moment of pain. His

profession, that of the politician, had made him subtle in the unrealities, and his sounding theories—his sociology, his brotherhood of man—were mocking terms with which he had amused his manhood. But now, at the moment of pain, as the mystic, toneless message of the west flooded his soul, the unreal fled from him and the real came.

It seemed to him that his soul was bare, was one with the air that quivered between him and the western star, flaming there on the threshold of the world. His rage, his pride, his honor, his conception of immutable justice, all the trinkets of his thought, shattered down, and the knowledge came that he, too, could be hurt; that he, too, was one of the multitude; that his ox might be the one in the ditch.

It was a moment of self-revelation and pain, and when he turned from the window his eyes were infinitely wise. At the table he smoothed out the crackling parchment paper. Then slowly, moving with still deliberation, he took up his pen and struck out his curt, "Not granted."

"Granted," he wrote, and again his pen paused, uplifted. Should he trouble to write out his reasons for bestowing his clemency on a woman who had twice broken the law? Was he himself certain of his reasons?

His excellency did not add his opinion to his decision—which did not matter in the least—for as his pen hung uplifted, the door to the inner room opened and the woman stood on the threshold.

"Hugo," she cried breathlessly, her laughter running into sobs, "Hugo, if you have signed the pardon, I want to tell you that—the story just now—that I lied!"



HIS SUGGESTION

GILLESPIE—I wonder what sort of collector I would make?

HARDRUM—You might let me have twenty dollars for ten days and find out.

A MONOLOGUE

BY THE PERSON WHO FORGETS NAMES BUT REMEMBERS FACES

By K. Douglas

WHY, how do you do, Mrs.—er—
er— You know, it's funny
how I cannot remember
names—but I *never* forget faces. De-
lighted to see you! Yes, thanks, I'm
disgustingly well. Dear me, it must
be five years at least since we met in
er—er—oh, *you* know—the place
where they had that awful earthquake.

Did you hear that Mr.—er—er—what
was his name, the proprietor of—of—
well, never mind, that hotel where we
were all stopping, has made millions in
a copper mine called—I've forgotten
what—some ungodly name—in—er—in
—er—I can't remember the town out
West. Such an odd Dick! Didn't he
have a glass eye, or was it a glassy
smile? The men used to say he was
an honorary member of the Ananias
Club. You see, he never told lies
about other people—only about him-
self. He had such a nice son, too;
a [second edition of his father—ex-
purgated!

How is your daughter—Mrs.—er—er?
Oh, yes, thanks! No, I did not know
her husband was dead. How very sad!
They were divorced, you say, two years
before? You amaze me. And to
think that Bishop—er—er—the bishop
who married them—dropped dead the
other day of—er—of—er—that disease
which begins with apple or orange or
something like that. You think he
wrote fine poetry? Fine and imprison-
ment, I should say. But, after all, he
was a dear old thing, and like most of us
Episcopalians—good in spots.

Do you still spend your Winters in—
—er—er—such a trial—if I only *could*
remember names!—that enchanting
Southern State. I do so love Saint—er,
Saint—er—what *is* the name of that

place with the old fort? It's something
like one of the months of the year.

By the way, we met Mr. and Mrs.—er
—er— You know, the ones who were
almost killed in that automobile acci-
dent last Spring in er—er—somewhere
abroad. She is a very pretty woman
with such beautifully manicured teeth
and laundered hair which she is now
wearing in that new hay-stack fashion.
Do you remember Colonel—er—er—
Thing-a-bob used to say when she was
a little girl that her eyes would have to
be muzzled when she got older? But
let me whisper it, my dear—of course
this is gossip—they do say that her
diamonds are as false as this tale is true.
Did you ever hear how she became
acquainted with her husband? Very
amusing! You know her people were
poor, and she had to do something, but
she had no special accomplishments—
unless you could call a bright and cheer-
ful disposition one. One day she in-
serted an advertisement in the *Herald*
something to this effect:

"Blues killed at so much an hour."

Well, Mr.—er—er (such a difficult
name to remember) had just had a
fearful attack of grippe, and was in con-
sequence suffering from blue devils
most of the time (he's of a melancholy
temperament anyway). The idea
tickled his fancy and he sent for her.
To make a long story short (that's a
real bromidic remark, by the way) he
fell in love with her and married her,
though his parents did everything to
break it off. But, my dear, when the
bell is rung you can't unring it! I be-
lieve they are very happy.

Well, I must be going. So glad to
have had this little chat with you. Do
come and see me soon. Good-bye!

THE HOMEWARD TRAIL

By Clinton Scollard

THE old signs keep the tryst by the river-marge and the lake;
There is the riven pine, and the crested crag in the brake;
There is the aspen wood, ghostly, shimmering, white,
And the slope where the maples burn like a pharos-fire by night;
There is the cloven height, and the echo-haunted vale;
O we are the clan of the Light of Foot, for we're off on the homeward trail.

Winter hangs on our heels like a hound that is keen of the scent;
And that sound from out the hills—was it the wind forespent,
Or the hungry snarl of the wolf-pack bickering over a bone,
And stirred by the taint of the man-smell up through the cedars blown?
The golden lure of the north, it is naught but a tattered tale;
The sharp hearth-love has gripped our souls, and we're off on the homeward trail.

We must breast the perilous pass; we must plunge through the icy ford;
We must run the rapids that roar and race where the ancient wrath is stored;
We must wind through the murky maze where the pines like pillars are;
We must crouch o'er the smoldering blaze under the midnight star;
We must rouse and away in the shuddering dawn ere the waning moon grows pale;
Yet are we kin to the Brothers of Joy, for we're off on the homeward trail!

Our hearts cry "On!" when we pause; our hearts cry "On!" when we pace;
And into the gleams of our deepest dreams comes ever a waiting face;
Where that face shines out like a flower there is our compass set,
And when we brood on the beckoning hour our eyes are dim and wet;
For we're sure of the welcome of open arms if we whisper "Win" or "Fail";
Then, lads, a cheer—let it ring out clear!—for we're off on the homeward trail!



AN INFERENCE

GRABBENHEIMER—Der banquet vas cerdainly schvell. V'y, efen der
spoons vas solid silfer, mit goldt bowls.
IKENSTEIN—Lafe me see vun oaf 'em, Abiel

THE EMPTY HOUSE

By Anna McClure Sholl

"WELL, go in," he said impatiently.

The woman hesitated, then crossed the threshold of the empty house, whose chill, musty, shut-in atmosphere was suggestive of another season than that which reigned outside in full strength of warmth and fecundity. The garden, rich in old-fashioned, gaily-colored flowers, had brought a faint look of hope to her face as they passed along its paths, but as she entered the house the old expression, half-fear, half-apathy, settled again upon her features. She paused in the broad hall, gathering up her skirts from the dust which lay thick on the floor. Her husband, his heavy footsteps echoing loudly, entered one of the rooms and began opening the windows. The Summer sunshine came in with dim, reluctant rays, revealing the tarnished state of a drawing-room, crumbling stucco and faded gilt.

"Out of repair," he grumbled. "I thought the price was too cheap."

He went from room to room on the ground floor, exulting over the fulfillment of his prophecies. The place was damp, the drains unspeakable, the kitchen prehistoric. His wife followed him, her figure drooping, her eyes apparently seeing nothing but some destiny of which this long uninhabited and ghostly house seemed the proper symbol. The kitchen surprised her into a little cry of dismay. Great lilac-bushes darkened the windows and filled the bare, gaunt place with a greenish, unwholesome light. Even the homely objects, the rusty stove, the sink, the old-fashioned boiler, looked disconnected from any real utility.

"The agent said he would put in a new range," he reassured her.

She was silent. He opened several cupboards in which she caught a glimpse of dark, fleeing shadows—perhaps spiders, which she dreaded. Then he led the way back to the front hall and upstairs, first carefully closing the entrance-door.

"Why don't you leave it open?" she said.

"Tramps," he answered.

The rooms upstairs seemed even less habitable. The paper was hanging in strips from the walls; long centipedes lurked in the corners near the ceilings. When the man had completed his survey he came back to where she stood gazing out upon the garden through one of the dusty windows.

"Well, how would you like to live here?" he demanded.

She shook her head.

"Why do you ask me? You know you mean to take the house whether I like it or not."

He smiled unpleasantly.

"What a mind-reader you are! Yes, I mean to take it, so you had better make up your mind to like it."

"It will cost you some money for repairs," she said, advancing the only argument which she knew had force with him.

"It will cost me not one cent for repairs. I know how to deal with agents. Besides, we're the patrons this time. This house hasn't been lived in for fifteen years. They're only too glad to get a tenant."

"Did he say why it hadn't been lived in?"

"Too far off on a lonely read."

"That is not the only reason," she commented.

His mean features betrayed him for a moment.

"Well, what is your imagination conjuring up now?"

"My imagination is not needed where facts are concerned. Something has happened in this house—something terrible—I don't know what, but I know you have no right to ask me to live here."

"Nerves again," he said impatiently. "Lord! if I had to consider your nerves every move I made we'd never do anything."

"That is not true. I am willing to save money for you anywhere, if the conditions are right. They're not in this house."

"They are for me. As an inventor I desire solitude. As a comparatively poor man I desire economy. Here both desiderata are obtained. We move in next month."

She said no more, for his word was law, his will inflexible. She had been crushed beneath it until she no longer had the power to protest. But she looked about her with a frightened, trapped expression. Her husband regarded her moodily.

"I am going back now to see the agent. There's no use for you to go with me. You stay here."

"Are you afraid I'll ask questions?"

"You'd gain nothing if you did ask them. The business is between me and the agent."

"I don't want to stay here," she said, "I'll go out in the garden."

"No, you're safest in the house. I'll lock the door."

She turned pale.

"I cannot stay in this house. I should go mad. I shall go into the garden."

"You will stay here if I say so," he said sharply. "It is high time you were cured of such childishness."

She trembled.

"How long will you be gone?"

"About an hour."

"Are you going to sign the lease?"

"Yes—a five-year lease."

"Oh, I don't want to live here!" she cried.

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, you'll have to make up your mind to it. Was that thunder?"

He went to the window. The sun had now gone behind a bank of dark storm-clouds. A ground wind was flattening the long grass in the garden. The light was changing into a dull saffron.

"It's going to rain. You'll have to stay in the house. It's going to thunder," he added, with a slight, malicious smile, knowing her fear of electric storms.

"Will you wait until the storm is over?" she questioned in the faint hope of a reprieve.

"No, my time's too valuable."

"You'll get wet."

"I have an umbrella," he answered.

She turned to him with an imploring look. "Don't go, James. Don't leave me here alone in this empty house with a storm coming. It's cruel."

"You need discipline. Women should learn not to be such cowards. I've been trying ever since I married you to teach you to control your nerves."

She shivered.

"Go, then. I'm not afraid."

Her pride had come to her rescue. He tapped her shoulder with his hard knuckles in token of his approval, then left her and strode down the stairs. She heard him close the front-door, and then, going to the window, she saw him walk quickly down the garden-path, his long, lean, black figure spider-like in the gathering gloom. His stooping shoulders and sleek head imparted to him in some strange way an air of respectability which never seemed to her quite normal. He was like a deacon with sinister intentions, yet she could not quite find the point at which his harsh, self-absorbed, viceless nature became flagitious and menacing. He frightened her, yet he struck no blows, except with his bitter tongue. He controlled her, yet he did no more than ask her to control herself. His miserliness oppressed and imprisoned

her, but more by its blankness than by any positive deprivation. She had always enough to eat, and a gown to wear in public that would not shame him. Yet she was conscious continually of an evil atmosphere about him, and she was glad that the children were dead that she had borne him. The prospect of being shut up with him in this ill-favored house for five long years terrified her enough in contemplation to make her forget her present forlorn situation.

It was growing darker. A heavy greenish light filled the room. Strange shadows flitted over the floor, cast by the wildly tossing branches of the unkempt trees outside. There was no use listening for noises—for the noises were everywhere, groans of timbers and creaking of floors, strange pattering echoes like those of small, light feet, soft whistlings of a wind that had entered the great chimney; long murmurs of something not human in distant rooms—something on the staircase that could not ascend, yet tried to come, not once, but thrice, each time her heart beating wildly until the attempt failed.

The darkness was suddenly cut through with a bluish light. She saw into a further room which had an open door leading into a very dark hall. She wondered if she had courage to go and shut that open door. But what if she were heard—not knowing who listened, who watched in these rooms called empty?

The thunder crashed about the house. The roar brought her back from that edge over which lay madness. She tried to take a few steps toward that open door in another room, then she nerved herself to go out in the hall instead. She wondered if she were really locked in. She did not dare go down and try the door lest she should find it locked.

She went back to her post and stood for a while immovable, a marble image of sick fear, her eyes turning this way and that, her ears strained to hear above the roaring of the storm other noises within the house. She won-

dered if God would let her die before the hour was over, before those occupants of the distant rooms came nearer.

Suddenly her anguished senses detected a sound unlike all the others, a firm footfall in the lower hall. It paused for a moment, then began to ascend the stairs.

She had been through such tortures of terror that this definite human sound brought a moment of relief. If this person were not her husband it might be someone to whom she could appeal. If danger menaced her, at least there would be a term to her suffering and she would know the worst.

She took several steps forward. The steps on the stairs suddenly stopped, and a strong, clear, man's voice, which she would have known among ten thousand, cried out, "Who's there?"

The miracle held her spellbound, but she put all her failing strength into her answering cry:

"It is Cecilia!"

"Cecilia!"

She knew that she had passed into that shadowy land of hallucination whose portals are the griefs and joys and terrors too poignant for the human mind to bear. She looked about for other forms as strange as his would be—her little dead children, or those unearthly faces which peer between the curtains of death-beds. Had they all come to sweep her wracked spirit into their own communion?

She waited, her eyes wide and bright with their vision. The steps came quickly now. In another moment his tall form blocked the doorway. His face was as white as the face of the dead, but in his eyes was a look of human wonder and joy and hope that steadied her brain and brought her out of her delirium.

"Andrew! you! you!"

She swayed, and he crossed the room and took her with rough eagerness into his arms, straining her to him like a man distraught, kissing her hair, her eyes, her lips, hurting her with his violence of joy and longing.

"You are alive!" she cried.

"Cecilia! You—dearest—here!—alone in this dreadful house! Cecilia, is it really you!"

He suddenly held her at arm's length.

"You look ill. You have suffered. What has made you look like that?"

"I was frightened," she quavered. "My husband left me here just before the storm, while he went to see the agent."

"He left you here alone!" he repeated sharply.

"He thinks I should learn to be brave. He often tests me this way, and I always fail."

"Tests you!"

His words were like a groan. He did not draw her to him again, but stood gazing at her, reading in her thin, hunted face the history of her twelve years of married life. He had the look of a man who encounters something intolerable.

Her eyes were drawing life and light from his, her spirit healing and calm. Out of the deep gulfs she came nearer and nearer to him with her burden of longing, the incommunicable message of her love and sorrow.

"Where did you come from, Andrew? Why are you here?"

"To save you," he said.

"But—you did not know!"

"No, I did not know, beloved. I sought shelter from the storm. I thought I heard footsteps on the floor above, and I came to see what it was. There are queer stories about this house."

"Something terrible happened here once, didn't it?"

"Yes, long ago. A woman was found—"

She put up a warning hand.

"Don't tell me. I have to live here. I don't want to know what happened here."

"You have to live here!" he cried.

"Yes—he—he has rented this house."

"Your husband!"

"Yes; it is cheap. It is lonely. He can work out his inventions unseen."

"And he brings you to this house!"

"Yes."

Her lips quivered as a child's. He looked down upon her in anguished silence.

"I thought you were dead, Andrew. He made me think so. He made me think even worse that year before my marriage."

His face paled beneath its tan.

"He made you think—what?"

She shook her head.

"Never mind. I knew too late it wasn't true. He told me himself it wasn't true after he had me— Oh, I have suffered!"

He made an incoherent sound, then drew her again roughly to him.

"Where do you live?" she questioned. "You look so big and strong, as if you were always out-of-doors."

"I am out-of-doors most of the time. I live fifteen miles from here, up in the mountains—far up—you can see into three States. I couldn't bear towns after I lost you. I have a small farm, small enough for Ben and myself to work—and I trap and hunt beside. It is a wild, lonely place."

"And Ben is with you still," she cried.

"He and I are all alone there. He is cook, farm-hand, useful man. But you, Cecilia—tell me—"

She shook her head.

"My poor love! How you have changed!"

She began to sob. He murmured broken love-words over her, choked by his own emotion.

"Has it always been like this, dearest?" he questioned.

"Yes, from the first. I could never please him. I was always in fear of him. The children were always in fear of him—till they died. They screamed with fright in their last illness when he entered the room where they were—poor, sick little children. I was glad they died. I want to die, too."

"You are coming with me," he said quietly. "You are coming as wife or sister or friend—as you will, but you are coming now. We must leave at once."

She looked at him as if she did not understand. He drew her closer to him.

"You are coming to the farm—away from this terror. And all the devils in hell will not be able to hurt or pursue you if I stand on the threshold. Let him come, let the whole world come. I save your reason and your life. I claim you mine before God and men—mine to protect, whatever you are to me—now and always."

A light glowed in her face which transformed it for a moment into the likeness of the girl he had known. Her faith answered his. He had feared lest her sick heart should question and hold back, but she reached out, like a soul soaring heavenward, for her deliverance, holding up her hands from the fearful gulf. He withdrew his arms.

"You shall come to them again of your own will, dear; and if never, you are still my wife—the wife of my soul—all mine to guard. Out of this horrible house now into the sunlight. See, the storm is over."

She gave a joyful cry and put her hand in his.

The man and the agent came back together, driving a wagon. They were to pick up the man's wife and then go on to the station.

As they drew rein before the house the man turned to the agent.

"Don't you speak about that murder—but which room was it in?"

"One of the upper ones. It has a long passage opening out of it. Folks say the door into that passage won't stay shut—and—she comes. Damned superstition, of course. A sensible man like you—"

"I'll drive out any ghosts—a woman's ghost especially," he chuckled. "I can always make women do as I will! As for the ghost of a woman, it wouldn't have the ghost of a chance."

He lingered over his joke until the agent appreciated its full flavor. Then he went briskly into the empty house.



THE WINE OF THE HILLS

By John Kendrick Bangs

OF all the drinks I ever knew,
 From Château wines to shandygaff,
 From soft cream ale fresh from the brew,
 Or champagnes full of life and laugh;
 Whate'er their kind or vintage be;
 However nutty, old and rare,
 There's none that so entrances me
 As good, crisp, fresh-brewed mountain air!

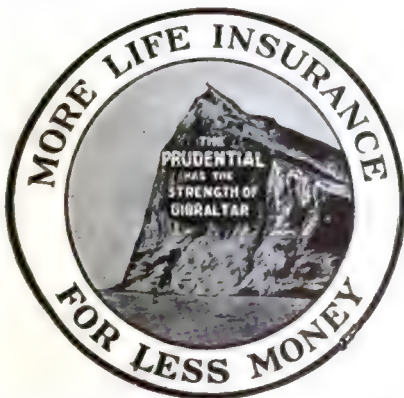
The bouquet of the tapering pine,
 Aroma of the wooded mount,
 As clear as was the crystal wine
 From Horace's Bandusian Fount!
 And O the joy when from my bed
 I rise when morn succeeds the rout
 To find, although I have a head,
 'Tis not the kind you read about!

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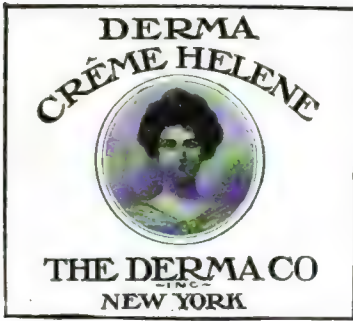
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The publishers of THE BOHEMIAN MAGAZINE have opened a short story competition for cash prizes, amounting to \$1,000.00. \$500.00 will be awarded to the writer whose story wins the first prize. Substantial prizes are also offered for the best jokes and short humor that are new and good. A certain class of fiction is desired along certain lines especially adapted to THE BOHEMIAN'S policies. Therefore, stories to be considered for any of the prizes must conform to the conditions set by the publishers. All the details and necessary information will be found in THE BOHEMIAN MAGAZINE for July, at any news stand.

In the BOHEMIAN MAGAZINE for July will also be found the details of a \$500.00 offer for short stories for THE GRAY GOOSE magazine. If any further information is desired by those who wish to enter this competition, it will be furnished upon application to

THE BOHEMIAN MAGAZINE

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